ALFRED GORDON BENNETT

COLLECTED POEMS

1920-1930

DUCKWORTH

The publication of this book should be regarded as something of an event. Besides marking the culmination of over ten years of verse-writing by a distinguished young novelist, it introduces to the general public the work of a poet of quite exceptional talent.

MR. BENNETT may be accused of occasionally being "highbrow," but when it is recalled that his work has been favourably compared with that of De la Mare, Le Gallienne and Rupert Brooke, it will be realised that the appeal he makes to the ordinary reader is by no means small.

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Last Autumn he received the Gold Medal and Diploma of Honour of the Société Académique d'Histoire Internationale of France in recognition of his literary achievements.

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COLLECTED POEMS

By ALFRED GORDON BENNETT

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VOICES OFF

Verse

COLLECTED POEMS

ALFRED GORDON BENNETT

COLLECTED POEMS

1920 ~ 1930

DUCKWORTH
3 HENRIETTA STREET
LONDON

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To
W. H. BALGARNIE, ESQ.
in fulfilment of an old promise

PROEM

WHEN to the blue the eagle streams,
On quivering pennons by the sun
Gilded, what midnight mountain dreams
Grow real to that brave heart, at one
With Mercury and Ariel
In æther's amethystine halls?
What legends shall the lone traveller tell
Of Universe, as earthward falls
His wearied wing, through the still June
Dusk that doth usher in the moon?

Would I might follow where he flies
His plumèd plane by day, or ride
Those boundless billows morning dyes
The colour of the rainbow! Hide
Me deep in the interstices
Of planet-patterned space—more far
Than eagles mount! Ah, such as these
Sight not the portals of a star.

Think, then, Dear Heart, when here I play
The trivial notes, mine hands would press
Gigantic organ-keys! And say—
When that I paint you April's dress
Of green and gold: "He would have drawn
The faery bowers of Paradise. . . ."
And O, when I sing of some dawn,
Know that it broke in your dark eyes!
Love, when I pen your little name,
Know that I write in fire and flame!

Morningside

TO THE READER

The poems contained in the present Collection have been written at intervals, both at home and abroad, during the past ten years. No attempt has been made to arrange them in chronological order, as such an arrangement would inevitably result in pieces that are widely divergent in theme and treatment being placed in irrelevant and perhaps confusing proximity.

It has, accordingly, been thought better to divide the volume into seven separate sections, in which works possessing a common thematic root, as it were, or some other association, either actual or imaginary, are grouped together. The final section may be regarded as an appendix, and comprises certain lyrics, one or two of a topical nature, that do not fall into any definite category.

A number of the poems in each section have already appeared in print, and amongst others I desire to tender thanks to the Editors of *American Poet*, *The Cape Argus*, *Contemporary Poetry*, *The Decachord*, *The Dublin Art Monthly*, *The Dublin Mercury*, *Embryo* (U.S.A.), *Home and Abroad* (France), *Hutchinson's Magazine*, *International Poetry Magazine* (U.S.A.), *The Jongleur*, *The Leys Fortnightly*, *The Manchester Book*, *The Mombasa Times*, *Nash's Magazine*, *Pall Mall*, *The Panton Magazine*, *Pegasus* (U.S.A.), *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry of To-day*, *Poetry and the Play*, *The Prism* (U.S.A.), *The Scillonian*, *The Sunrise Annual*, *T.P's and Cassell's Weekly* and *The Western Morning News* for their discernment in giving them their first publicity, and, in cases where the works are copyright, for their permission to reproduce them here.

The lyric, *Song of the Caravan Merchants*, on pages 147–8, is taken from an unpublished poetical drama, *The Sword*; and was personally broadcasted by the author, under the auspices of the British Broadcasting Corporation, in October, 1928. *Mystic Tryst* and *Vision*, on pages 30–1, originally appeared, rendered into French, in the *Revue Internationale* (Paris). Other poems are reprinted from Volume V of *The County Series of Contemporary Poetry* (Fowler Wright, Ltd.); from *Principal Poets of the World* (The Mitre Press); from the Portfolio, *Poets and Poetry* ("Studies" Publications, France), and from three of my own novels by courtesy of Messrs. Ernest Benn, Ltd., The Macaulay Company, New York, and the present publishers, Messrs. Duckworth and Co.

A. G. B.

CONTENTS

I

	PAGE
GULF STREAM	17
NEW YORK	17
THE LINER	18
OFF LABRADOR	19
THE PHANTOM SHIP	19
ALIEN	20
THE RUINED PALACE	21
MOOD	21
LEROS	22
CAIRENE	23
SOUTH SEAS	23
SOUTHERN LOVE	24

II

AT THE WINDOW	27
SATURN	29
MYSTIC TRYST	30
VISION	31
RESEARCH	32
INSPIRATION	32
INTERROGATION	34
ÆONS AGO	34
INTERLUDE	36
AFTERMATH	39
CEMETERY	40
FANATIC	41
POINTS OF VIEW	42
TO THE MOON	43
SOUVENIR	44
INCIDENTAL	45
SUSAN'S HEAVEN	46

CONTENTS continued

	PAGE
ROMANCE	47
DEAD CARTHAGE	48
A THOUGHT	49
SENTENCE	49
POST-MORTEM	50
FULL-POINT	50
NOUGHT PLUS NOUGHT	51
EPIC FUTILE	52
SURMISE OF JUDGMENT	55
OMNIFARIOUS IMPRESSION	56
I COMFORT MY SOUL	57

III

QUATRAINS	63

IV

FRAGMENT	69
INFATUATION	69
IN ABSENCE	70
DISQUIET	71
QUARREL	74
LOVELORN	76
HAUNTED	77
SONG	78
FANCY	79
PARALLEL	79
MACABRE	80
QUERIES	81
NOW NO MORE	83
WERE I THE SUN	84
FOUR TANKAS	85
ENIGMA	86
ALL FOR YOU	87
COMPARISON	89
VICTORY	90
NOW THIS IS HEAVEN	91

CONTENTS continued

	PAGE
MELODY	91
LYRIC	93
"LIFT YOUR LIPS TO KISS ME"	95
LINES	96
TOILET	96
FOX-TROT MINUS MUSIC	97
ENCOUNTER	98
"WHO WAS IT PUT THESE VIOLETS IN YOUR EYES?"	99
TRIOLET	99
RESURRECTION	100
NE PLUS ULTRA	100
DISSONANCE	102
TO A JESTER	107
SONG (FROM "THE SEA OF SLEEP")	108
LYRIC	109
THURLESTONE	110
BATHER	111
A SONG OF TIME	112
QUIXOTIC	113
ILLUSION	114
FELON	116
TAILPIECE	117

V

ULYSSES	121
THE ROSE OF LOVE	122
SONNET TO MYSELF	124
SHALL I SING OF HELEN?	125
SEEK HER NOT	127
SHE IS ASLEEP	128
BEFORE TEA	129
THE THIRD	130
RETURN	131
TO LET	132
INTERIOR	133
MAGIC	134

CONTENTS continued

PAGE

SCILLONIA 135
EQUATOR 137
SUBMARINE 138
PETIT CABARET 139
THE LAND OF HAN 140
DAYBREAK : NEW YORK 143

VI

SONG OF THE CARAVAN MERCHANTS 147
IN ISPAHAN 149
THE HOUSE OF PLEASURE 150
SONG IN DAMASCUS 151
GREEN CHARTREUSE 152
PALMYRA 153
SALAMBO 153
NOCTURNE 155

VII

JEW 159
MEMORY 159
ASSIZE 160
CAROL 162
THE STAR 163
NEW YEAR 165
POSTSCRIPT 166

I

GULF-STREAM

ALONG the vessel's side the cacophonous, deep
Laughter of ebon waters. . . . Overhead
A painted sky: a cobalt canvas spread
To screen the Archangels (who, snoring, sleep
In Heaven) from earth's incinerating sun!
Breathes not a breath. Time's panorama flows
Monotonously by; and in the throes
Of heat, Atlantic, Ship and Man are One.

So till the night, when beats from the hot south
The wind—a gurgle in the torrid throat
Of space: an exhalation from the mouth
Of God. . . . Then sudden stirs, a sentient thing,
This sweating, sick and spell-bewitchèd boat—
Skimming the ocean on ecstatic wing!

S.S. Leviathan: 1923

NEW YORK

THE city sleeps—deep in the deep noon-haze
Concealed as by a robe of gossamer;
And only the frail pinnacles of her,
The towers, the edifices, eager raise
Attenuated fingers, in amaze,
To touch the blue, cloud-dappled floor of heaven.
The city sleeps. . . . Ah, yes, Dear Heart, and even
Sleeps this gold river that round her stone feet plays.

It is not so. Perish the idle thought!
As to the piers our boat glides soft along—
A mighty gondola—on the air rolls
The thunder of her peoples: a cry wrought
From the hot, panting throat of her who trolls,
In agony of waking, a vain song. . . .

Hudson River: 1923

THE LINER

SHE comes. A pale pantechnicon of dream
On this unmoonlit, shimmering, swaying, vast
River of stars afloat: leisurely past
The somnolent city drifting as a gleam,
A radiance, an effulgent, fulvous beam
Strayed through the æther-wastes: a meteor fast
Flung from some affluent sun, who idly cast
It earthward in a golden, glowing stream!

Thus to the sea—a sentient shape of light
Mobile on tides that sleep, and slumbering
Waste to their ebb and billow to their flood
Ruled by the magnet Moon-Queen of the night! . . .
Strange, Heart, that this so airy, fairy thing
Should wrought of iron be, and fire, and blood!

Quebec: The St. Lawrence: 1923

OFF LABRADOR

FROM frigid zones of death drift down at will
The immeasurable floes—unleashed, unbound—
Towards these brooding midnight shores, around
Whose iron buttresses the Atlantic's chill,
Blue, crapulous breakers sport and surge and play
In maniac mirth: themselves from the ice grip
Freed; and forgetful how, around this ship,
The titan bergs converge, as on their prey!

It matters not. She rides on the calm swell
Of the mid stream, 'neath the white battlements
Of phantom fortresses: a frozen spell
About her spun by bearded Boreas, dark
King of auroral polar realms. . . . while scents
Already in her a feast the lustful shark!

1923

THE PHANTOM SHIP

(From a Picture)

SEE! Rises yonder from the abysmal deeps
Of storm-lashed ocean, a white, glistening thing,
The Phantom Ship! . . . Hark how the winds shrill sing
Within her tattered shrouds while, storm-rocked, sleeps
Her spectral crew, as their ghost Captain keeps
His awful vigil with more awful eyes
Until, into the night, the tempest dies
And back to her green grave his dead craft creeps!

" Pull for the shore, brave fishers ! Pull amain !
The great tides thunder towards the barrier reef ;
And, on their bosom borne, this maniac Barque
Reels in pursuit of us : striving to gain
Possession of our souls, that they, in her dark
Bowels entombed, may share her deathless grief ! "

ALIEN

THIS ship, she is asleep ; and she doth dream,
Here by the dusty quay, inert, alone,
Of far, familiar shores set in a zone
Less torrid : washed by spume-tipped tides that stream
O'er rock and shoal relentless, till they gleam
In a last, plumèd ecstasy, then die
In tremulous equipoise 'twixt earth and sky—
Or murderously shake her shuddering beam !

She is asleep. Her ancient hull, time-scarred,
Snuffles the piles. Two derricks toil and din
Above her gaping holds. . . . She heeds them not.
Here, where the sun of Good Hope shines, this marred,
Decrepit Greenock-tramp, seared with the sin
Of all the Seven Seas, doth dream and rot.

Cape Town : November, 1927

THE RUINED PALACE

LO! this, the Palace Seyyid Barghash wrought,
With mighty columns menacing the moon,
To house his choicest women, now, full soon,
Is crumbled into dust. . . . Of its glory nought
But legend lingers; and the tenderest thought
Of its fairest occupant is nothing more—
To-day—than a fading light in a dream that is o'er,
Or a minim of dew in a transient cobweb caught.

So must it always be: the loveliest
Pass like a little wind in the night forever;
Temple and obelisk, in their pride and their treasure,
Totter and tumble! Soft hands we have once caressed
Grow languid and cold. . . . Red mouths from red mouths
dissever,
And the ghostly Coffin-maker makes ready his measure.

Zanzibar: December, 1927

MOOD

LOVE, I have written this and this of you;
And sung your praises with a succulent air
In drawing-rooms that frankly don't compare
With salons Louis Seize. . . . But now, vast, blue
Oceans divide us; and I find it true
Remoteness lends veracity to Truth;
Find I have grown a-weary of your youth;
And find your damned insouciance bores me, too.

Thus, I think darkly in myself that I
Will make release from you—forget you quite;
And steal across yon camel-dotted, dumb
Desert towards some pinnacle of sky:
There, through the splendour of Old Egypt's night,
To cleanse me of you in Time's Vacuum!

Port Sudan: December, 1927

LEROS

ALL ghostly in the dawn, fair Leros lifts
From out th' Ægean foam her feathered, green
And nodding palms, that they may catch the sheen
Of sunlight riving through the widening rifts
Of heaven's cloud-patterned floor, as higher drifts,
On wings of flame, Apollo—from the grey,
Ghoul-welter of the night his august way
Cleaving, until the panorama shifts. . . .

The skies burn blue: the deep sea sinks to gold;
And morning wraps the island in a cloak
Of resurrection: whilst slow breakers boom
Upon the shore, as once they broke of old,
In pinnacles of spray and spires of smoke,
Chanting the leper-litany: "*Room! Room!*"

Athens

CAIRENE

I HAVE gazed oft on Beauty. Unashamed,
Familiar grown with its white, wondrous ways,
Through moon-pale nights, and sleepy summer days,
When it (some maid barbaric and untamed)
Suffered the trespass : nay, all subtly claimed
A further ravage, and rejoiced therein. . . .
Now, in *thine* arms, new Loved-one, would I sin—
By the sword glances of thine eyes inflamed.

Yea, I would voice this passion that is mine
With lips on thy dark bosom deeply pressed,
Searing the flesh away—twin bars of fire!
It may not be. Such loveliness as thine
Is not so easily to be possessed,
And doth not surrebound to cheap desire.

Cairo : April, 1930

SOUTH SEAS

SOFT, heart. Hush, heart. Is yonder gold-girt shore,
Washed by these blue, these amethystine seas,
That of the dim, fabled Hesperides :
Island of Happiness, of which no more
Mariners tell their tales ; and whence of yore
Ivory girls looked out, with love-lit eyes,
To watch from the brass gates of the sunrise
The questing galleons burst—their hazard o'er?

Ah, no. The panorama pales. Those palms
Screen but a rude and reed-wrought dwelling-place
In whose dumb, gaping door a woman lies,
Cradling within her amber-gleaming arms
An amber child, who presses his flat face
Against her giant breast, and sucks and sighs!

SOUTHERN LOVE

JUST for one hour yield thou thyself to me:
Surrender, within my arms, the gleaming, white
Fortress that *is* thyself. O, on this night
Of moonless summer calm, in ecstasy
Mingle thine elements with mine, and be
Happy. . . . For all too soon, across the plain,
The dawn will break, and widen, and sustain
Itself in light until it reach the sea.

Lift thou thy lips. A thousand æons gone,
Kings would have bloody-battled for thy mouth,
And for thy least caress have choked the breath
Back from their lungs, and perished! Now alone
In this forgotten garden of the south,
Kiss me—lest in the cypress hovers Death.

II

AT THE WINDOW

MY window looks towards the west, and I
Sometimes ensconce myself before the pane;
There, through the fragilely falling Autumnal rain,
Sitting and staring: feasting my eyes on the sky—

My yearning eyes, that are grown tired of seeking,
Through all heaven's labyrinth of shining spheres,
That one Ideal Star the evening wears
On its Ethiopian robe, as a Symbol speaking,

Inaudibly, the ocean of æther over,
Of all that shall abide, all that's enduring
When the dark Gaoler, Time, no longer immuring
Dreamers such as I, and their dreams, in the cover

Of his inescapable pennons, has fled; and the soul slips,
Free of its fetters, striving on Leda-like wings
Out to the shining and changeless Heart of Things,
The age-old swan-song thrilling from its lips. . . .

For somewhere, most surely, on that Eternal Star,
Whose rays resolve these rain-drops into fire,
Yellow and green and minute, on the pane, desire
Will taste of satiation; and in that far

Hereafter, will sink to rest like a babe who, sleeping,
Remembers not the bosom it strove to capture
And press to its petulant lips in an avid rapture
Of need. . . . Yes, in the Ideal Star's safe-keeping,

The Self, I think, mysteriously will rekindle
Its essence of being : all vital ichors restoring
At the Immortal Springs of the Lamb—outpouring
From the wide-opened Side. . . . And the senses will dwindle

Irrevocably back to ash, as the Spirit, remoulded,
Refed and imbued by the draughts of those sacred fountains,
Soars to the ultimate peak of penultimate mountains
To rest—in their blue and their gold and their crimson enfolded ;

Like pallid Eryops, from the ooze-beds emerging,
Invertebrate seeker of kingdoms of earth and of air,
Into the warmth of the sun—so the Spirit will dare
All for its glamorous Dream, on that Star; and there purging

Base, carnal dross from the indestructible gold
Of immortality ; and exquisitely blending
Mind with the Perfect Mind, shall taste the unending
Fruit of the Tree of Life that grows not old.

Thus, at the window, I stare ; and, staring, only
Ponder the rain-drop globules of light descending,
Like a virgin's tears that ever she weeps without ending,
Till dawn comes, stealing the Star, and the world grows lonely.

Yet always, within the heart, the bright Vision is cherished;
The Thought persists, though the thinker be no more named;
His dust by the flowers on the crest of his grave is reclaimed—
And the flowers are the Sign of the Star, though the Star, too, be perished.

SATURN

THE mighty planet steals through the calm, blue
Glamorous æther-wastes soft as a sigh;
And all the universe goes drifting by—
Star upon star great Galileo knew,
And Schiaparelli marked, with patient pen,
Upon his chart. . . . What mysteries are there
By yon bright belt concealed? Across that bare
And flame-wreathed face pass ever the shadows of—men?

High in their hallowed heaven, the great rings rise—
Scintillant arches, shutting out the pale
Beams of the sun, who like a narwhal plies
His ghostly vans about this spinning, fell
And vaporous sphere: upon whose roseate, frail
Sea-crest moves not one life-bequeathing cell!

MYSTIC TRYST

SLEEPS the Immortal Rose,
her petals kissed
by the cool loveliness
of evening mist.

Sleeps she in darkness there,
in quietness ;
dim in the sea-green garden's
loneliness.

Wrapped in her cloak of red,
veils she her face
from the cold eyes of men,
for a space.

Bides she in dream, till June
moths wheel and come
down moon-paved avenues
to her, their home:

Hide them in honey'd deeps :
rest on her breast,
as rests the fledgling bird
in its nest.

So till the amber dawn
beacons above,
share they, in mystic tryst,
silence and love.

VISION

ACROSS the hills,
far away,
tiptoes the lovely
lady, Day.

You may not see her dreaming eyes,
you may not see her hands,
scattering flowers of sunlight
over lonely, languid lands.

You may not glimpse her laughing lips,
her tiny, twinkling feet,
than a thousand young gazelles
or the wind more fleet.

You may not see the bosoms white,
or see the flame-flecked hair
of the lovely lady, Day,
because—she is not there!

She never was—and never is—
and never will be—
save in the foolish heart, and in
the singing soul of me!

RESEARCH

WITHIN the cathode-glass
The ions surge. . . .
Lo! with what titan urge
The unseen torrents pass

Out to the vacuum void!
Ah, whither ends
Each awful journey, sentinel, who sends
Back to their Maker these, the Undestroyed?

Who knows what empires die, what planets reel,
When the invisible hounds
Leap to the utmost inter-stellar bounds,
Loosed from the master's strong, restraining heel?

Grim wizard of bleak formulæ and signs,
And eager hands,
Tell me what austere beacon thus commands
You to where Mount Olympus soars and shines?

INSPIRATION

LET me see thy face!
Let me behold thine eyes!
Eyes splendid, austere and strange,
And brighter than the bright whirl of the stars!
Let me hear thy voice!

Voice stern and all-commanding,
Resonant as thunder. . . .
Voice that, since my birth,
Hath urged me onward and onward unceasingly
Towards my goal!

Let me take thy hand!
Hand that hath led me, calmly adamant,
Up the hanging acclivities,
The perilous precipices of Ambition:
Ever higher and higher,
Forward and forward, into the mist—
The soul-enveloping mist,
And the scudding, ominous clouds,
The black-fleeced, louring clouds,
Towards the remote, sun-dappled plateau,
The uttermost infinitesimal peak
Of Olympus!

Let me see thy face!
Let me behold thine eyes!
Let me hear thy voice!
Let me take thy hand!
. . . . Alas, my mortal vision cannot decipher
Thy countenance.
I stretch forth my fingers feebly
To touch the flame-woven hem of thy garment,
And lo! as I touch. . . . thou art gone. . . .

The Adelphi

INTERROGATION

POISED on the yawning precipice of Time,
I paused, and scann'd the pyrophanous universe,
The Brobdingnagian Scheme! There asked of God
The Why and Wherefore of His Engines vast
That, to no end discernible, so run
In monumental might from dawn to doom:
(Wheel within flaming wheel, planet and sun
In shuddering circumnavigation driven
To æther's penultimate bounds!) Did ask the Dream's
Interpretation of the Triune Brain
Which dreamed it: conjur'd, coaxed, cajoled, besought
Solution of the Riddle, ere I leapt
Forth to annihilation!
Yea, thus stood
I there—Prometheus, trembling and unbound—
And adamantly asked! Lo, Answer fell:
"Ah, me—ah, me—would I Myself could tell. . . ."

ÆONS AGO

ADOUR, deluded Djinn,
Æons ago
Said: "I will make a world!"
—And it was so.

Was, from the sullen sun,
A nebula flung,
The scared universe
Of stars among.

Blazoned it there in space,
  Until Time wrought
Magical change upon
  That orb—and caught

Cool winds to weave around
  Its fevered form:
Metamorphosing death
  To life: and storm

To blue tranquillity:
  Tempest to peace;
And soft rain caressed its hills,
  Gentle heart's-ease

Bloomed its green meadows in,
  And cowslip bells
Made all enchanted its
  Deep dales and dells.

Then, stirred there, white and still
  In the dawn, *Man*.
And to fruition came
  That idle Plan.

INTERLUDE

(Between Records)

EACH a traveller, travel we
Time, towards Infinity:
Microcosms hurtled through
A cathode-tube of burning blue
At the awful Chemist's will
Everlastingly, until,
Bizarre Analyses concluded,
We—distrait, debased, deluded—
Are released in Heaven's retort,
O, Best Beloved, without a thought:
There to scintillate and eddy
Till New Processes are ready
And the Game begins afresh—
Disentangling Soul from Flesh!

Yet I think when we have beached
Ourselves in Paradise, and reached
All the untold, unending Blisses,
We shall fret for Flesh's kisses,
Clasp ectoplasmic hands, and sigh
For mortal contacts—wonder why
Lips that on earth burned warm and red
Seem chill and flaccid to the Dead;
And later, growing dour and daring,
Cavil God for thus preparing
Mansions for our pleasure so
Colossally replete, and slow. . . .

Yes, I think within a week
We shall tire of Heaven, and seek
For new delights and new diversions—
Inquire if there be day-excursions
To the planets, Mars or Venus—
And, if so, procure between us
Tickets to the one or other—
Asking Gabriel, as a brother,
To provide a tip or two
What to see, and what to do!
Think, O Best Beloved, what fun
To circumnavigate the sun!

Then—a million years gone by—
Atrophied Flesh will feebly cry
Its Final Protest, and release
Its hold on Soul—yea, in decease
Of matter, we shall surely find
Changeless Perfection to the mind
Most pleasing. . . . You and I will fly,
Brighter than gossamer, in the sky,
The rimless Dome of Space; and tread
Celestial stairways. . . . On your head
Of glowing gold will bloom the Crown
Of the Elect! And never a frown
Of care will furrow that dear brow,
Luminous and transparent, now,
With Cognisance! And those sweet eyes
Will radiate Supreme Replies
To every Question I shall frame—
Deeming you still the same. . . . the same. . . .

Child ! thus I postulate 't will be,
When They've made perfect you and me,
When the Experiment is ended
And to the august Will we're bended,
I shall grow sick for landscapes builded
Minus all these emblazoned, gilded,
High horizons : pine for places
More familiar—and faces
Less transfigured by the brightness
Of the Throne's diurnal whiteness. . . .
Shall for dear, discordant voices
Cry (whilst Holy Heaven rejoices
Over my conversion !) : listen,
In the streets that glint and glisten,
For some remembered " Damn " or " Deuce "
In a drawing-room let loose
By a slipshod, earthly fellow
Imbibing nicotine more mellow
Than any weed they cultivate,
Profusely, round the Golden Gate. . . .

Well, well, my Dear, to occupy
Ourselves with Heaven ere we die
Seems somewhat premature and eerie,
Certainly. . . . Another cheery
Record on the gramophone,
In a measure, might atone
For valuable moments spent
In such a futile Argument.
There—in my arms, you'll soon forget
All the perfervid fear and sweat

Of one day being compelled to camp
In Abraham's bosom, feeling cramp
Gnaw each lovely leg and knee—
What's the record? . . . *Rose Marie?*
(*Presumably they fox-trot*)

AFTERMATH

LIKE to a wind blowing
over a stone
is the soul's desire
when love is gone:

withered its embers
down to dust,
the sanctuary broken
and red with rust.

Like to a wind that
comes and goes,
heavily laden
with old woes:

seeking a boundless
and burning sea
to court the white sails
wide and free:

yet ever must blow o'er stick and stone,
alone. . . . alone. . . .

CEMETERY

So many graves,
stone on stone,
and under each
red earth alone.

So many symbols
tritely stand
on my left
and my right hand.

Strange, when each stone
has crumbled quite,
others will spring up
overnight!

So it goes on,
and on and on:
man and stone grow
wholly One. . . .

Then, think on this:
When stones decay,
whither is the dust of them
stolen away?

Aye, think of this:
Where the flower
that bloomed in the jam-pot
one lost hour?

FANATIC

HIS dreams are deluged with the blood that flows
From soldiers' bodies, when the bayonet tears
Out all the shining entrails. In his brain,
All maggot-mangled by the lust to slay,
Fantastic visions dance: by day, he sees
Cities dissolve in smoke, and rivers run
Turgid with corpses. . . . while the slim shells scream,
In ecstasy, through heaven, and all the guns
Thunder in menace and recoil; and then
Vomit their glimmering spawn anew ere Death
Strikes at the sweating myrmidons and ends
The ghastly Carnival, and bids the moon
Pour her serene ablution over all.

No rest he knows. The phantoms drive him on.
Fire in his head and gore on either hand;
The Thorny Crown askew upon his brow,
He strides the earth and dins his litany:
"Out of my path! It is not peace I bring,
But Gabriel's flaming sword! Behold, and bow
The knee before me! I the Master am:
The awful Absolute—at whose approach
The strong men tremble, and their women weep,
As with my breath I purge them, one by one,
Into Infinity's foam: no more, no less
Than little dreams that, for a moment's space,
Glint on the mildewed mirrors of the mind,
Then vanish. . . . God my august Witness is,
And I His Doom-bright Angel! Look—and *die*!"

POINTS OF VIEW

THE other day, a vacant hearse
Careered down our street;
I said: "I think a hearse looks worse
Empty, than when replete
With corpse and coffin, flowers, and frills!"
You did not answer me;
You said: "How beautifully trills
The robin in this tree."

One freezing night, a pedlar came,
With buttons, to the house;
I said: "Don't buy her dirty trash!"
But you—elusive mouse!—
Stepped swiftly to the open door
And bought a card or two;
I frowned: "Such waste of money, child!"
You smiled: "Her hands were blue. . . ."

Once, walking in the town, I cried:
"These stones are splashed with blood!"
You said: "O, yes—the butcher dropped
A sirloin in the mud. . . ."
I paused: "I swear there's been a fight!
Lo! torrents have been shed!"
You laughed: "A pavement-artist, dear,
Has daubed the pavement red."

And when I cry: "There is no God!
No Heaven! No earth! No Hell!"
Solomon's wisdom old, in you,
Asks: "Then, what wizard spell

Has thus inexorably bound
Our souls through Time? And why,
If there be neither earth nor Heaven,
Do rainbows span the sky?"

So do we daily register
Impressions, as they pass
The separate portals of the mind
As shadows on a glass.
And when Life's grim cacophony
My heart, re-echoing, hears,
Your heart is beating to the faint,
Far music of the spheres. . . .
Where these myopic eyes descry
The black, blown plumes of woe,
Your young retinas mirror palms—
And patterned peaks of snow!

TO THE MOON

YES, you are tranquil as Endymion's eyes,
Soft-closed in sleep by your age-frozen kiss;
In the dim heavens, your jewelled chariot flies
By night through realms of unimagined bliss.
Your bosom is as cool as the sweet snow
That lies upon the house-tops—tender nest!—
How many shining angels theeward go
To bury their gold heads against that breast?
Ah, if I could, would I not travel, too,
Across the illimitable leagues of space:
And clasp my arms about the form of you,
And lure to life your passionless, dreaming face!

SOUVENIR

I HUNG Christ on the wall—a silver Christ,
Tacked to a tiny Tree of olive-wood;
The sunset shot its arrows through the room,
Striking the silver till it glowed like blood.

I hung Christ on the wall; but afterwards,
Stood Him upon my table, in a place
Where I could catch the shimmer of His form,
But could not see His suffering, silver face.

Weeks later, I hid Him in an empty drawer,
Saying: "No longer shall He trouble me,
Poor, pitiful Symbol of a perishing Dream. . . ."
The drawer was damp; and soon a verdigris

Spread o'er the stricken silver, till it changed
Into one ineradicable stain;
I held Christ in my immaculate hands, and wept:
"Thus have I crucified Thee once again."

Jerusalem: Easter, 1930

INCIDENTAL

SWIFT as the panther
stalks his prey;
or the satyr, Night,
pursues the Day;

swift as the javelin
speeds to the breast;
or the simoom blows
from east to west;

swift as the planet
encircles the sun,
hasten we all
to Oblivion.

Say, what the Riddle,
and why the Race—
and is the grave
our only grace?

Hurry and scurry,
to and fro—
and nobody knows,
or wants to know!

SUSAN'S HEAVEN

IN Susan's Heaven
seraphs bend
the knee, and chant
praise without end.

Censers a-swing,
obeisance they
make at the Godhead's
feet of clay.

The jasper walls
give back the sound,
the gamut of Timeless
Day around.

Not a curtain rustles;
the gold lamps stare
like a million eyes
on the hosts at prayer.

"And now to the Father,
now to the Son. . . ."
echo the acolytes,
one by one.

The smoke ascends
in spirals blue—
there's nothing else
for it to do.

Poised on His spotless
Edifice,
the Great Panjandrum
nods: "How nice!"

ROMANCE

HO! on a white horse,
armed cap-à-pie,
stoutly I would sally forth
the wondrous world to see.

Down the long, wide, winding roads,
remote perspectives grand:
over the lush green meadows
and the dappled desert sand

galloping merrily
till dusk comes over
earth, and enfolds her
in dream, like a lover.

Gay tilt and tourney,
skirmish and jest—
a purple pennon on my lance,
a red cross on my breast.

Up to the great acclivities,
towards the sky,
we would go careering,
my white horse and I.

Under the rainbow arches,
high in air,
adamant, my Pegasus
and I would fare.

Along the topmost terraces
and viaducts of light:
ever winging onward
into the night!

Into the night. . . . *Ah! who*
shall tell what Beauty rare,
starry and strange, awaits
the traveller there?

DEAD CARTHAGE

SLEEPS dead Carthage in the dust,
As eventually must
Sleep all cities 'neath the sun—
Time permutateth every one.

Each pulsates its little Day,
Time then withereth it away;
Aye, they sojourn; aye, they go—
This and That, and So and So.

A and B, and X and Y
Scintillate until—they die,
And to a dust-finale come. . . .
But you and I within the tomb,

Dear, shall disintegrate—grow rotten—
Decompose—be quite forgotten
By the friends we loved the best. . . .
Fiddlededee! I'd rather rest

In bricky ruin, like a city,
Than engender maggots' pity.
Fancy lying dead and dirty—
Two Immortals, under thirty!

Bizerta, Tunis, 1930

A THOUGHT

THE planets round the negroid neck of night
Hang, as a pendant wrought of jewels rare,
Gathered on some elysian island's white,
Foam-spattered shore: across whose wet sands bare,
Brown naiad-girls pursue, with laughing eyes,
Strange, polychromic birds-of-paradise.

SENTENCE

WITHIN the midnight womb of Space
And Time conceived, a star
Flaunted its glory in God's face,
Within the midnight womb of Space
Where planets sunward wheel and race.

. . . . .

Immeasurably far
Within the midnight womb of Space
And Time conceived, a star

Tossing its fulvous, fiery mane,
Down the abysses fell
Thundering amid leonid rain.
Tossing its fulvous, fiery mane,
Carving a devastating lane
To its sidereal Hell—
Tossing its fulvous, fiery mane,
Down the abysses fell. . . .

POST-MORTEM

INCARCERATED in a sheath of lead,
My Soul, in my dead body pent, doth brood
On life; and wrapped in icy solitude,
Love, doth recall the casual words you said,

With shy, flower-lips, that summer long ago:
"I think that, after death, we shall again
Meet in a land of sunshine and soft rain.
There *is* no death—for Something tells me so."

Now, my Soul, in this rotting coffin hid,
Remembers these, your words, your prophecies;
And with implacable and maddened eyes,
Stares at the unrelenting, leaden lid!

FULL-POINT

—to the life-story of any atheist

"IS this the end of the long road, then?"
"Yes."
"Have I finished, at last, that interminable climb?"
"This is the End of Everything, my friend—
Life—Space—and Time."

"The 'End of Everything'? Come, sir—you jest!
There is no sea but has its further shore,
No clouds, but they conceal some mountain-top——"
"The rest is silence. There is Nothing More."

"O, listen! One moment ago, I heard a thrush,
Deep in a blackthorn, singing clear and strong——"
"Where there is Nothing—*Nothing*—how can there
Be either audience, singer, or a song?"

NOUGHT PLUS NOUGHT

ALONE with Echo,
I cried: "Who
loves me?" And Echo
answered: "*You!*"

Alone with Echo,
I cried: "When
will my Time come?"
Echo answered: "*Then!*"

Baffled, I cried:
"Good Echo, whither
am I bound through life?"
Echo chuckled: "*Thither!*"

"Now, jesting Echo,"
I pleaded, "tell
me how to escape
the Burning Hell?"

Alone with the wind,
the wold and the sky,
I waited—till Echo
hooted: "*Try!*"

Incensed by these
repeated checks,
I shrieked: "Who is God?"
Echo thundered: "*X!*"

EPIC FUTILE

COLD, cold, cold,
cold the grave,
as a Lapland night is,
or a polar wave.

No sunshine impinges
upon the eye
in whose glazèd pool
fish-maggots lie,

or float, without passion,
to and fro
over an iris that
used to know

the blaze of a hawthorn—
bush in Spring,
and the flash of an essorant
skylark's wing;

the pink of poppies,
the greens of June,
and the tangerine of
the harvest-moon;

the scarlet of lips,
and the snow of a girl's
breast; and the glint in
her golden curls;

the blue of the old
Mediterranean,
and the oceans that ravened
ere Man began. . . .

Yes, cold the grave,
very dark and still—
a moss-caked mound on
a windy hill;

grim haunt of things that
peer and prowl:
odiferous bats, and
the screeching owl!

Yes, cold the grave,
and cold we'd find it,
beyond a doubt, if
our Spirits lined it.

But as they don't,
there would seem no call
to consider its temperature
at all—

hence, this minor Epic
by Gordon Bennett,
is rendered extremely
pointless, when it

is remembered that
death's a dream,
and the fuss about graves a
Perfect Scream!

For what is a *grave*,
with the spheres above
jazzing Eternal
Life and Love?

And (by God!) what can dis-
integration matter,
while Heaven hums with
the " dead's " brave chatter?

SURMISE OF JUDGMENT

WHEN the gold trumpets in Valhalla blow,
And I walk with the Many to that place
Where One sits, phantom-winged, austere of face,
Reading the Record Book, Beloved, I know

Suddenly I shall behold your exquisite eyes
Laughing at me from some dark corner or other;
And I shall shout—exclaim—then, shamedly smother
My joy: remembering I'm in Paradise!

And you, Beloved? I think you'll take my hand,
Just as you used to do—and we will walk
Up to the ebon-footed daïs. You'll talk
To the grey Judge, and make Him understand

How otherwhere, and in another land,
We loved. And then, Dear Heart, I think you'll look
Shyly into His face. . . . He'll shut His Book,
And put aside His hour-glass and His sand

Impetuously, as I suppose, and cry:
"Enough of this! O, quite enough of this!
These earthly lovers languish for a kiss—
Bid them away to where the summer sky

"Burns bronze and blue above the nodding trees."
So will He sentence pass, that austere Judge;
Re-open His Book: "Ah, well—that's over. Fudge!
Would I Myself were mortal! Now—*next please*!"

OMNIFARIOUS IMPRESSION

GOD in this bowl of violets? Well,
Then God in this olent ordure see;
God in the garbage-heaps, as in
The dust of me and thee.

God in the kidney, larynx, lung;
God in the prostrate gland;
In the semi-lunar cartilage,
In eye, in nose, in hand.

God manifested everywhere—
From the protoplasmic drop
To the eagle brooding, dark and dim,
On Fujiyama's top.

The salamander-God concealed
In the hydric heart of the sun,
With the God Who lies in lovers' eyes,
A-dream, is wholly One.

God in the gramophone—the clock—
In a thousand humdrum things;
A bush, a bat, a dragon-fly—
Yea, God, with rainbow wings.

God in my table; in my books,
And in my easy-chair;
God in each spheric atom whirled,
Relentless, here and there.

. . . . .

Think, then, O man: When brother-man
Consigns thee to the sod,
He is bequeathing unto worms
And millipedes—his God.

I COMFORT MY SOUL

MATTER cannot be destroyed!
Accordingly, my Soul I buoyed
With the strange Absolute. Said I:
"Well, Ego, if the Body die
You and it again may meet,
Corporeally, and so complete
A metamorphic transmutation——"
But Soul replied, with hesitation:
"Master, love I my Body well,
And though a subtle Circean spell
May reunite Body and me
By some celestial wizardry—
What if old Body hath changed form
Into a grasshopper, or worm?"

The odd contingency I pondered,
Whilst Soul, within me, startled, wondered
On the prospect: cogitated,
And mutely for my answer waited. . . .
At length, I said: "In that event,
Better the Body to ash went
And made a novel habitat
For animalcule, louse, or rat."

I smiled: "At least, you'd then be free,
Ethereally, to come with me
To God: from Him to beg a body,
Human in form, if somewhat shoddy,
Second-hand, distended, dirty—
(Bodies grow nasty after thirty!):
Still—one with nose and ears and eyes
To sample, savour Paradise
Might do.

"Soul, very certain's this:
Old Body you would greatly miss.
Therefore, O Soul, I would suggest
That—after all—it might be best
For you and Body, One, to work
To die together. . . . and so burke
A hundred complicated issues!
Let Body, free, disburse his tissues
As he will; he, to the law
Inexorably bound, may draw
Out from the dust from whence he came
New entities to vaunt him: claim
He'd rather house a centipede
Than trouble God: before Him plead
His post-deceasèd right to you!
Then, when he in the grave lies blue
And, mottled, stinks: obscene and rotten—
By every One and Thing forgotten—
You will be dreamlessly asleep,
Suspended, Soul, some six feet deep
In the kind earth that was your home,
Till, one day, Archangel may come:
Touch you and wake you—softly say:

'You need no body, now, of clay.
We have for you a Brighter Raiment,
For which we are not asking payment,
But freely give, out of our pity
For you, entombèd in this city
Cemetery, grim and cold. . . .
Come! Robe yourself! Each foaming fold
Was woven by Gabriel on a loom
Of jacinth, in a sunlit Room
Above a field of asphodel
Wherein laugh many you loved well
On earth. . . . They wait your advent. Rise,
And wing, with me, the Ultimate Skies——'

"Thus, thus, O, Soul, I think for you
Vesture will be provided.
"Who
Set Sirius in his starry place,
And Capella with chrysoprase
And platinum endowed: and tinted
The Alpine sunsets with gold minted
Ninety million miles away,
Would never, Soul, see you decay
Unmoved. . . .
"Now, Soul, I tell you this:
The God Who fashioned you, Soul, is
A God of Pity and Increase——
So, Soul, have peace. . . . Soul, be at peace."

III

Somewhere beyond the gates of the gold sun,
God orders-out the Day Not Yet Begun:
Planning each second with such delicate care
That it is night before the task is done.

And yet, Beloved, He stole one tiny space
Of Time, in which to fashion your dear face
Of flowers and starlight, and sweet April rain,
Woven together in a marble Case.

All the strange scents of dim Arabia are
Blended in you, as in a pourri-jar:
Perfumes to make the senses reel and swoon—
Jasmine and spikenard and wistaria.

Softer than softest down, your fragrant breast,
Whereon my weary head may rest. . . . and rest. . . .
In an Oblivion undisturbed by dreams
Of agonised striving for the Unpossessed.

Beloved, upon that bosom's tenderness,
A million delicate kisses would I press.
O, would you stir a little, smile in dream—
As at some phantom-lover's dream-caress?

Crimson the rose-leaves of your scarlet mouth,
As rose-leaves blowing in the rosy south.
Ah, lift each lovely petal to my lips,
That the cool dew thereon may quench their drouth.

And if within your starry eyes there lies
The wonder of a child—a child's surprise;
Beloved, in those violet pools there, too,
Glimmers a light most wonderfully wise.

O woman painted out of dreams and sighs,
O lily-woman with enchanted eyes:
Tell me—yon Artist, God—how could He find
Courage to banish *you* from His blue skies?

White moths that flutter underneath the moon,
Soon shall you slip into the icy swoon
Of death. . . . Crumble your airy wings to dust
That bore you through the stilly nights of June.

So shall my Lady, dancing on the grass,
Into the shining halls of silence pass:
Toss her gold head in quiet, proud dismay,
Then—shiver to fragments, like a broken glass!

And when the hooded eyes upon *me* peer,
And Death, the Phantom Dancer, circles near,
Suddenly your white hands will leap to me—
And you will whisper, through the Darkness: "Dear. . . ."

Strange, that within this surging city pent,
My Loveliest should appear so well-content—
She who was one with sea and sun and star,
Beneath God's azure-tinted firmament!

Dance through the world, fantastic Butterfly!
The Midnight Hour will come when *you* must die,
And all the little, lesser lights you loved
Fade in the sapphire Pageant of the sky.

Round heaven's blue, archèd roof the planets flow
Kaleidoscopically to and fro.
Strange, that across the dazzling Harlequinade
You pass—a Shadow in Time's shadow-show.

What if, from holy union, there springs,
Beloved, a Bird who far more sweetly sings
Than I? O, say my song you still will hear—
Lest I should envious grow, and clip his wings!

Mandragora and hashish to me bear,
And cloying opium. In my wild despair,
My Sense and Self I choose to slay *this* way—
Not lose my Soul in labyrinthine prayer!

I saw, as in a glass, the Sákí's eyes
Watching me drain the Cup of Paradise:
Toss it upon the grass: smile, blink and nod—
Watching me—silent—with a strange surmise.

What is it this old, doddering greybeard saith
Anent the Sákí, speaking with hush'd breath?
"My drums are dulled with wine, lean closer yet!"
What! is yon sombre visaged Sákí *Death*?

Will you not break this heart? Then, let it break
Of its volition, breaking for your sake.
Yielding of life for *you* is Utmost Joy—
Ah, of the foaming, crimson mead partake!

So, if this life IS all, and we MUST die,
And there IS nothing ELSE beyond the sky,
Tell me, Great Sákí, my Beloved's face—
Must IT TOO with the worms and maggots lie?

IV

FRAGMENT

UNDER what topaz moon
was my Love born;
beneath what blossoming bowers;
from what forlorn,

primordial and planet-haunted stream
did she arise:
searching the midnight-muffled world for me
with her great eyes?

INFATUATION

AS round the horse-shoe poles
the filings fly
obedient to the law,
even so I

haste to thy milk-white arms,
O Best Beloved:
Ego towards Entity
implacably moved!

As to the bunsen's tongue
moth swirls and slips,
dazzled by dream, even so
I seek thy lips.

As molecule coheres
to molecule,
bind I myself to thee—
Time's naked Fool!

IN ABSENCE

CIRCE of ivory more white
Than that which pillared Jamshýd's Hall
In ages gone, all life's delight—
Flowers, birds and music—every one—
Vanished when you into the night

From my house stepped, serene and proud,
Swaying a-down the hazèd street
Into the fog's Autumnal shroud. . . .
Ah, still your faint, receding tread
I hear—and cry your name aloud.

You come not back. Days sigh and die,
As the clock on the mantel ticks
Monotonously, whilst the sky
Grows leaden as the last leaves fall,
Sere, at the feet of passers-by.

Time ebbs and flows as doth the sea;
Insensible my every sense
Remains, Beloved—eerily
After the maelström drugged and stilled
Until you hasten back to me.

When Winter metamorphosed is,
And Spring returns, maybe I'll hear
Once more, through the old silences,
Your feet upon the paving-stones
Ring in the beacon of your eyes.

Yet—should you come not, garlanded,
In April to my house again,
Despair shall never bow my head:
For always Heaven hath its May—
And June will rosy blossoms shed.

DISQUIET

I HAVE been too long
Alone with my thoughts. . . .
Even the minutes are percolated,
Now, with sharp pictures—
Unforgettable pictures—
Of You.

I am distressed because of the redness
Of Your lips, that I may not
Kiss:
By the remembered texture of Your hands,
Which I may not
Hold:
And by the clear Image of You
Poised against a splendidly symbolical sunset.

Men have travelled the world
In order to find respite
From You.
But from the hot plains
To the cool heights of the Himalaya;
From the solemn, starlit peaks of Thibet
To the ant-ridden jungles of Tonking;

From the lacquered shrines of Burma and Siam
To the opulent, grey cities
Of the Occident;
Yes, from England to the Arctic Sea,
The thought of You has journeyed
With them. . . .

Through the abysmal and labyrinthine
Caves of the mind
You have pursued me—
Like the beam of a lanthorn carried
By a company of very far distant,
Yet ever-nearing, soldiers. . . .
And if some inexplicable metempsychosis
Were, to-day, to change me into a fish,
I should still perceive You in the light
That filters down, fathoms deep, from the wind-ruffled
lagunas—
Down through the tunnelled interstices
Of sunken reefs
Of coral . . . .
Still would my goggling eyes descry,
In that drowned sunshine,
The gleam of Your own eyes
As my fancy pictures them!

And it is to be expected
That I should pillage wantonly
The wrecks of old quinqueremes and galleons—
Swayed by a vague idea
Of finding You there amongst the shadows
And the bleached, soundlessly-moving
Bones of the dead. . . .

Is there, then, no place
Where I can hope to escape
Your eerie company?
Is there not a bourne, somewhere,
Beyond Space and Time
And these material planes of sordidity,
Where I may hope to evade
This devastating, confounding and confusing
Memory of You Whom I have never
Known?

Or is it that the brittle thread
The gods have woven throughout the fleeting passage
Of the past two thousand million years
Has bound You inseverably
To me?

QUARREL

OVER me and over me,
When I die, let the clean sea
Flow, responsive to the chill
Magnet of the moon, and swill
Silently about my face,
Leaving never a toll or trace
Of the Me you used to know
Long ago, long ago.

Half a hundred fathoms deep
Sling me, sailor, there to sleep
In a coral Paradise,
Mingling with lymphatic, wise
Fish: sharing with them the peace
That lies where ocean-motions cease:
Watching, with bubbles on my lips,
Titanic images of ships
Blot the light and swing and pass,
As shadows in a shadow-glass,
To some prolific port, mayhap,
They've painted in on chart and map
Since my decease. . . . Ah, well, I wonder,
When the great tides break in thunder,
Shall I know, or shall I care—
Hidden there, hidden there?

In some sea-green, icy chamber,
Dear, I'll think on you: remember
How you tossed your flaxen head;
How your mouth moved when you said:

" Life and love are very soon over. . . ."
Sillily, slimy rocks I'll cover
With fish-kisses sensual,
Meaning nothing, O, nothing at all!
I put it to you: Ocean's pools
Are most desirable for fools. . . .

I put it to you: Fish-flirtations
Most pleasingly of fish-relations
Are devoid. . . . (My God! My God!
Picture my sire-in-law a cod!)
No, all are free to come and go
Right and left, and to and fro—
Or so it seems they go and come
In a select aquarium!
Then, over me and over me,
When I die, let the clean sea
Flow, responsive to the chill
Magnet of the moon, and swill
Silently about this face
(Then " Abracadabra'd " to a plaice!)
You weary of in London Town.
And wished that Boulter's Lock might drown!

Jermyn Street

LOVELORN

WHAT if, on the highmost balconies
Of thought, a spirit there
Standeth mysteriously poised,
Brighter than air?
I should not care.

What if, on the furthest orb,
Flower-fragrant breasts, than snow
More white, for you soft sigh,
Breathing deep and slow?
I should not know.

What if, on the outermost edge
Of æther's flood,
Gleams a golden strand?
No loved-one ever would
There take my hand.

What if savannas strange,
In untrod leagues of light
Stretch to infinity—
Past Aldebaran bright?
Only the night

I see, and the whirl of the stars
Above the rising mist
Of the star-windowed stream;
And the lips I have not kissed
Kiss me in dream. . . .

HAUNTED

I CANNOT rid myself of you;
Your image through each indolent day
Companions me upon my way:
Witness of everything I do,
Testator to each smile and frown,
Each impotent gesture of the clown
You never knew.

I cannot rid myself! O fell,
Dark Circe, is it always so
My soul must follow where you go;
O, one day, will those red lips tell
The Why and Wherefore of the quest—
Love, will that unrevealèd breast
Cradle this weary head in Hell?

Is there a sombre trysting-place,
In the post-Lethean land of tears,
Whose stygian gloom a garland wears
Of light reflected from your face;
Must I pursue, to that retreat,
Your dim, decoying, twinkling feet
Ere I find respite from the Chase?

SONG

PETALS of a June flower
Would I gather for your bower;
Make a carpet, rare and sweet,
To scent your slender, wayward feet;
Weave a garland for your hair—
Lilies white and roses red—
Kiss your lips, and lay it there
On your soft and fragrant bed.

Would you stir, or would you wake,
Just a moment—for my sake?
Or only shuttered moonbeams fall
Silver over floor and wall. . . .
Touch your face with a caress:
Touch your pillow: touch your eyes
In holy benediction: bless
One who thus so lovely lies?

Petals of a June flower
Droop and perish in an hour;
Faëry carpets fade and die
Like a scarce-remembered sigh;
Garlands spun of earthly blooms
Wither into earth again;
Human lips rot in grey tombs—
Only you and love remain.

Rhôs

FANCY

A SOFT-SHUT lily is your face at night;
A dreaming violet your languorous eyes;
The snow is your young bosom, cool and white;
Your soul—the iridescent fire-flies!

PARALLEL

SEE how the wind drives flailing through the grass;
Moans round the headland, and flutters the ears of corn;
Blows your soft hair as smoke about your head,
Then—dies even as it has come.

Thuswise, I think your love sweeps round *me*, Dear;
Kisses my lips, and eddies through my hair;
Envelops me with giant arms, and then
Laughs, and forgets me utterly. . . .

MACABRE

WHEN I am laid
on my last bed,
and over me
the sheet is spread,
immaculately
starched and tight,
what will you think,
O lily-white?

Will you weep long
for me, my Dear—
crouched by my little,
bourgeois bier;
will you light candles—
one; two; three—
and sit the ghost hours
through with me?

Will your hands close
on my cold ones
as ever, Sweet—
though the death-sweat runs,
viscid and salt,
from every pore,
and out of my veins
the amœbæ bore?

And will you kiss
the dribbling lips
myxomycetes
launch their ships

of doom upon—
seeming to make
pretence to scorn them,
for my sake?

Soft. . . . Will my ME
be your Myrmidon,
shadowy and strange,
when I am gone?

Though I Am Not,
shall I be there
each midnight, when you
comb your hair?

QUERIES

IF in a ghostly garden
I met you,
would you raise your lips to kiss me
as you used to do?

Would you come along a-dancing
on starry feet,
and should I, through the silence,
hear your sweet heart beat

softly, very softly,
as against your breast
my weary head your tiny hands
passionately pressed?

O, in that ghostly garden,
where the phantom fountains sing,
would you play at resurrecting
all the things a-slumbering?

Would you touch the icy lilies,
and the frozen flowers of death,
and breathe upon the garden
your resuscitating breath—

till a Presence, than the sunlight
more bright, came stealing through
the great gates of the garden
to take a look at you?

Then—would those baby bosoms make
Pillow for deep sleeping,
Child—or would you lie awake,
weeping—weeping?

If in such ghostly garden
I met you,
would you raise your lips to kiss me,
as you used to do?

Delamere

NOW NO MORE

BLEW the wild thyme
In our lane;
And foaming fuchsias,
A-glint with rain,
A crimson glory
Made overhead;
And the wild roses
Pale petals shed

And made a carpet
For our feet,
Very soft and,
As incense, sweet.
And in the wide air
A lark sung—
Bright Ariel and
His court among.

Now no more blows there
The vagrant thyme;
No fiery fuchsias
The hedgerows climb.
Ah, no wild roses
Pink petals shed:
For you are gone, Dear—
And all are dead.

WERE I THE SUN

WERE I the sun, I would not rise
Save I could shine upon your face;
Were I the wind, I would not blow
Save I could scent your resting-place
With odours from the Indian Sea—
Jasmine, myristica and myrrh—
Or fan your eyelids: with my breath
Set languid lily-leaves astir.

Were I the sea, I would not make
My myriad motions save I bore
Your coracle upon my heart
To some palm-girt, elysian shore.
Were I a star, I would not keep
My nomad vigil through the years
Save I could now and then, in dream,
Pour my compassion on your tears.

Were I the moon, my countenance
I would not in the dusk unveil
Save it should guide a lover's steps
Unto your bower, as to a Grail:
Unto your lips, as to a fount
Of *eau-de-naffe*: unto your breast;
And on its delicate whiteness bid
Him lay his heavy head, and rest.

Were I the world, I would not roll
Through interplanetary night
Save I could hold, my orbit round,
The beacon of your eyes in sight.

Yea, were I God, I would not deck
A single garden with a rose
Unless I knew about its stem
Your little hand would clasp and close!

FOUR TANKAS

(After the Japanese)

I HAVE been thinking:
How beautiful is the hair
Of my Beloved.
Has all the gold of Syria
Then been lavished on one girl?

Once, before the dawn
Spread its ochre fan across
The sea, I wakened
Chilled by a strange dream of death—
To find warm arms about me.

If I should meet God
Suddenly in our garden
Face to face, I know
His great eyes would look past me
Towards my Beloved's window.

When first I kissed her
In that dark forest we know,
Her lips quivered on mine
Like cool flowers. . . . Now, when we kiss,
They burn—and I wonder why?

ENIGMA

IN the dust-bin in the yard,
White maggots writhe and crawl
With movements sinuously
Incessant: that appal

Me, staring thus on them,
(Dear Heaven, that such things be!)
Foaming the rotting garbage as
The white waves of a sea.

Two days ago, there was not one
White maggot in this bin;
And now an obscene, phantom Hand
Has dropped a billion in!

Strange, that the God Who sowed the sky
With stars, and lit the blue
Lamps of your eyes, Beloved,
Should fashion maggots, too. . . .

ALL FOR YOU

THE silver steeples of the dawn,
The burning buttresses of night,
Are both by the strange Artist drawn
For your ephemeral delight.

The hyacinth that, in its bowl,
Sets all my window-pane aglow,
To make a glory for your eyes
Titanically willed to grow.

The wind malingering in your hair,
Frolicking with each errant curl,
Awakens at your bidding. . . . Where
Rules Emperor mightier than this girl?

For though, in senate, Socrates
Wrestled to prove his eloquence—
One laughing word from your young lips
Sends many a stalwart army hence

To wage your battles, and proclaim
Your sweet dominion in all lands:
Writing in flame your little Name
On violet veldts and coral strands!

The caravans of Orient bring
Their spices to the Gate o' the Moon;
But, for your pleasure, God doth pour
Abroad the fragrancies of June.

The dark dhartura lifts its face—
A tapered chalice, dewed and damp—
To kiss your hand. Syringas raise
Above your head a lilac lamp. . . .

And every comet that doth toss
Its topaz tail in æther's flood,
Casts molecules of energy
Earthward, to fortify the blood

It seems you value rather less
Than yestereve's champagne (gone pop
Without a thought!), or some *chic* dress
You've captured in a Bond Street shop!

Aye, even the awful, distant sun,
Full ninety million miles away,
Kindles his calcium limes, and fires
His hydric vats to give you day!

Child! from its ultimate A to Z,
All Universe, to let you Be
Conspires. . . . And cosmic seas run red
That you may—being—smile on me!

Odd that the Maker of the spheres,
The starry streets that do not end,
Should, on one microcosm—You!—
Such august energies expend. . . .

Embassy Court

COMPARISON

WHEN the sun
on a white daisy
pours its glory,
every lazy,
good-for-nothing
butterfly
bestirs himself
to peep and pry
within the golden-
hearted cup,
in quest of an
ambrosial sup.

Precisely so,
when the first pale spear
of Dawn cuts our window-
curtains, Dear,
I bestir me,
in my bed,
to kiss your golden,
sleepy head:
to kiss your mouth
and then, with awe
lest I wake you,
deftly draw
your pretty night-gown
from your breast
to kiss you where I
love you best. . . .

Thus, with the sunshine
in my eyes,
each morn I quaff
your fragrancies!

VICTORY

YOU answered: "I love you, dear——" And, at the words,
Throughout the darkling heavens ten thousand swords
Of purple lightning from their scabbards flashed:
Thunder in pæan upon pæan crashed
Down the long tunnels of the firmament;
And God from His high Throne of ivory bent
Afraid. . . . Whilst the Archangels, one by one,
Mounted their milk-white steeds, and towards the sun
Galloped in maniac glee! And palsied earth
Trembled to witness their unholy mirth:
Rivers ran blood: from out its station fell
Star upon star, into the flaming hell
Of heat bedrawn, as by a magnet hung
The black interstices of space among!
Siroccan winds swept, screaming, through the sky
In pressure terrible: the dead did cry
Eerily in their tombs: the oceans moaned
On desolate shores of grief. . . . and Time stood still,
As I stooped near, and kissed the lips you loaned
A moment to me, on that wind-blown hill
Above the forest. . . . Then, we two, alone,
Sat silent, hand in hand: the Tempest gone. . . .

Llangwstenyn: April 30th, 1923

NOW THIS IS HEAVEN

"NOW this is Heaven!" the Flaming Angel said,
Opening wide for me the twelfth great Gate
Of Pearl. "Sad, wayworn traveller, step within.
We give you hearty welcome. You are late,
And have been long expected."
I said: "I paused
A moment, on my path from star to star,
To see if I could hear, across all space,
The footsteps of my Love, beating afar
In faint pursuit of me. . . ."
The Angel said:
"How could you hope to hear such tiny feet
As hers ring on the floors of Universe
Above the planets' clamour?"
I answered: "Friend,
Though Doom were thundering, I should still hear *hers*."

MELODY

DAFFODILLIES filled with dew
Are golden as the hair of you;
Red roses from the south
Are the redness of your mouth;
And violets your eyes:
So young, so wise;
Deep snow your bosom white—
Or cool moonlight.

Waves on a silver strand
The caress of your hand;
Jasmine in a garden fair
Your cheeks, rich and rare.
Carpets loomed in Khorassan
In colour are not richer than
Your voice's sweet song—
Pearl-notes on a necklace long.

Sunset on a tropic sea
Your smile's tranquillity;
And your Soul at dusk must keep
Holy, mystic tryst with Sleep:
Else, how could your face possess
Such exquisite tenderness?
Child! I wonder do you know
Why the angels blessed you so?

Amaranth beneath your feet
Springs, each satin kiss to greet;
No caravans more laden are
With dreaming perfumes from afar
Than is your breath. O Heart's Delight—
More magical than Day or Night!—
Entranced, you walk the world, and Death
From your presence hurrieth.

Lute-players in Babylon
Made music to the rising sun:
Sang of earthly pomp and power—
Playthings of a little hour.

Cities crumble into dust;
Maggots through red rose-leaves thrust;
Lutes grow mute, soft voices fail—
Only Beauty shall prevail!
Beauty shall not cease to be
Till you cease from loving me.

LYRIC

AT night tint the sea
Jasper and chalcedony;
While scent the drowsy air
Pale magnolias and myrrh;
Sinks slowly the red sun,
His long, lone journey done,
Over the horizon till
Molten moonbeams silver spill

On the couch where you will sleep,
Cradled in cathedral-deep
Bowers of blossom. And O, where
I shall glimpse, through moonlit hair,
Your face motionless
In dim Lethean loveliness:
Breathe the fragrancy of you
As breathes the rose the dew.

Closer yet—yes, closer yet—
The while the dreaming daisies fret
White moths for kisses, will I steal
To you, Beloved: lowly kneel

Beside your bed—strange altar-pyre
To kindle with my soul's desire
To flame! . . . Ah, better I should rest
In starrèd darkness on your breast.

Lay me beside you, sentinel,
On a globe poised 'twixt Heaven and Hell;
My most sacred watch to take
In silence, for your sleeping sake;
In silence, mingle hand with hand,
And lip with lip, and understand
How love is born, and passion dies,
When two meet thus in Paradise. . . .

So till amber morning breaks,
And the risen sun-god slakes
His parchèd throat with dew distilled
In flower-chalices, and filled
To each petalled brim with deep
Tinctures from the vats of Sleep,
You will lie exquisitely
Close against the heart of me:

Sharing moments of such bliss
As only unto mortals is
By angels given—they who gaze
Down Life's mosaic, mazèd ways
With starry eyes—who ghostly stand,
On phantom peaks, in the blue land
Of Aftermath. . . . questing in vain
The Immutable Heart, the Immutable Brain
Of two who love for love alone,
And—loving—are Eternal One!

LIFT your lips to kiss me;
Place your hand in mine,
Like a folded petal;
Let your dark eyes shine
'Neath the tantalising
Darkness of your hair;
Lay your heart upon my heart,
Sweet—and hold it there.

So in quiet unstirring,
Never a sign or word,
Bide within my bosom
Like a nesting-bird.
Just the pulses leaping,
Urging on the blood;
Time about us washing
Like a sleepy flood.

Deeper into Rapture,
Deeper dropping yet;
Nothing to remember;
Nothing to forget.
Past and Present blending;
Future like a star;
Love a dim ship stealing
Out beyond the bar. . . .
1929

LINES

IN all the wastes of space, there gleamed one star :
Its radiance a mystery to me.
Very remote—O, infinitely far
It shone, from out an iridescent sea.

So, o'er the barren desert of my Soul,
Your violet eyes glow soft and tenderly :
Twin stars that shimmer in the ebon bowl
Of night, and constitute all Heaven for me !

TOILET

MY Love is going to take her bath :
the water, amethyst,
leaps up to kiss her ankles slim
and frolics round her wrist.

My Love is going to take her bath.
Lo ! as she stoops and tests
its temperature, the water foams,
hungry, about her breasts.

My Love reclines within her bath,
and languorously sighs ;
the water, still insatiable,
sobs o'er her silken thighs.

The lamp, it casts a golden glow ;
my Love, she does not stir ;
but, wholly acquiescent, lets
the water ravish her. . . .

Jermyn Street

FOX-TROT MINUS MUSIC

IF you were to leave me,
what should I do?
If you were to vanish,
all the bright blue
they have painted the sky with
would turn into grey—
if you were to leave me,
or vanish, one day.

Love's a pale Pantaloon,
Time an old Thief;
too soon will our gladness
turn into grief;
nothing remain, then,
but the sound of your laughter,
faint as a fairy-voice
following after. . . .

Sweet, am I dreaming;
is it all over—
laughter and all the light
lies of the lover?
Give me your hand. Look!
on each fragile finger,
suffer my kisses
a moment to linger.

Now, I am seeking,
Angel, your mouth—
red as those poppies
we plucked in the south.

Hush! I am pleading
with God for the rest:
Death when you leave me—
this final behest:

Death, and the Darkness,
and No One to stare—
mocking my madness
when you are not there!
How poignant these passions,
how solemn and shy,
that come like the whirlwind
and go like a sigh.

S.S. Angkor

ENCOUNTER

NIGHT is falling softly over the town, and the wind, faintly sighing,
Rustles the dead leaves, ghost-like, a-down the street;
The west is shot purple and gold, where the bloody sun, dying,
Hangs on the transient line where earth and sky meet.

Night has enveloped the town, and the gas-lamps are flaring,
A medley of jaundiced yellow and glaucous blue;
On the fair-ground, the roundabouts are hooting and blaring,
And lo! in the polyglot mob, I come upon. . . . You!

WHO was it put these violets in your eyes;
Who stole the dew that round about them lies;
Who was it painted your two lips so red;
And who wove this gold aureole for your head;
Who *could* have strangely fashioned you like this—
From dreams and tears, from laughter and from sighs?

TRIOLET

BELOVED, think not, when I die,
I shall in Heaven forget
Your face. O, in that domèd Sky,
Beloved, think not, when I die,
I shall not your star-face descry
Shining on me: God-set.
Beloved, think not, when I die,
I shall in Heaven forget. . . .

RESURRECTION

WHEN the brave dead, who have lain still so long,
Rise at the blast of Gabriel's golden horn
With one accord, on the dew-pearlèd Morn
Of Resurrection: with a shout, a song
Of triumph. . . . I, amid the surging throng
Of revellers, shall wander, lost, forlorn,
Disconsolate, with bitterest anguish torn—
Seeking your face those millions among—

Till, suddenly, One shall beckon me, and say:
"In yonder gay pavilion of flowers,
A woman mourns her loved-one absent here."
Then, I shall start and stare—hasten away,
Through Heaven's arboreal and balmy bowers,
To kiss your trembling lips, and call you: "Dear——"

NE PLUS ULTRA

ALL right. Death's Death. And Life is Life;
And beyond that no man
May go with surety, and so
We are no wiser than

We were before our argument—
An impasse has arisen,
That burkes all issues, seals all lips,
And damns all dreams of Heaven!

" Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,"
Agreed. So let it be :
The brave, brown earth shall garment us,
And Immortality

Is but a beacon-light, a star
Men set their eyes upon
When the pitiful castles of cards they build
Have crumbled and tumbled and gone :

Is but the stirrings of the heart,
On secret and shadowy wings,
In quest of innumerable bright
And non-existent things.

There is no more to do—or say—
Ne plus ultra is this.
Yet—tell me, Beloved, *what white flame*
Burnt in your last close kiss?

DISSONANCE

I

THERE'S a stirring of Strange Things,
Sometimes, and a beat of wings
About the house, as quiet I sit
To-night, and ponder the firelit
Kitchen solemn: wondering why
My tea-time teasing made you cry,
And why you sought the banishment
Of bed, in puerile discontent:
And why the streets are sopping wet,
And why so obviously sweat
The passing poor, when naught I say
Can suage *your* marble coolth away:
Arouse in you antagonism—
Chip the bright and glassy prism
Of your eyes to kindliness. . . .
Ah, well, no doubt we've made a mess
Of love and loving. . . .
That being true,
Tell me what on earth you'd do
Should I one day warn you, clearly,
That I'm very—*very*—nearly
At my tether's end, and might
Blow my brains out some dark night?

So I ponder; so I plan;
And, all the time, my senses can
Catch the cacophonous laughter
Of the Things in beam and rafter!

Kitchen groweth desolate,
Sink the embers in the grate,
Trickles Time more slow and slow
On to midnight; and I know
That overhead you're lying, waiting
For some foolish, satiating
Demonstration or effusion
Planned to recreate Illusion!
How the bubbles bulge and billow,
Rosy-red, above your pillow. . . .

Rush and rustle; pitter-patter,
Go the Things that Do Not Matter,
On the florid floor and ceiling—
(O, my Dear, I know you're feeling
Melancholy there, and rotten:
Thinking you are quite forgotten!)
Eerily, old Candle splutters—
Only Vacuum never stutters
Like this asphyxiated air. . . .
  Have you found wider courts there
In the softly shaded chamber
Where you fret, because December
Has played havoc with your loving,
And set macabre motions moving?
Have you? Well, I'll soon be groping
Myopically to you: hoping
To share with you remembered Places—
Intermingled hands and faces—
Tell me: When I repair to bed,
Will you forget the words I said?

II

Heart of my heart, is there a fragrant
Eldorado-land, where vagrant,
Foolish lovers such as we
May attain Serenity?
Is there a shoreless sea, I wonder,
Beyond Night and Time, where thunder
Everlasting breakers. . . . pounding
Immemorial reefs: resounding
Through the dark caves of Universe?

Well, I know you will rehearse
Each petty detail of forgiving:
(Ghastly penalty of living!)
Reiterate each trick of speech
Most calculatingly to reach
My frozen fastnesses. . . .
Child, is
Passion so banal we must spend,
In Argument that Will Not End,
Our pulsing Hour, when the replies
Of mutually-asking eyes
Would metamorphose everything,
And turn bleak Winter into Spring?

Is it that body has grown cold
To body? . . . Nay, love, overbold,
Still stirs those limbs of ivory
At the irreverent touch of me!
Still heave those bosoms, still they break
Into pink blossom, for my sake;

Still trembles wayward hand to hand
In ecstasy ; eyes understand
Language of eyes ; and lips grow wet
With ardour Soul doth not forget.

Where, then, the odd discrepancy—
That Eyes of Being do not see :
That ectoplasmic mouths still miss
Meaning of the Material Kiss :
And though the phallic limbs of love
Resurgent to its fierce tides move,
Soul-limbs remain inanimate,
And Egos are left desolate ?

Learnèd you are in little ways
Of gentleness and maiden grace,
Yet, when Mind pleads with Mind to change
Dissonance into Calm, a strange,
Extraneous Personality
Moves in the house. . . . Though Majesty
Came thundering down to talk with you,
I know not if those dark eyes of blue
Would to immediate tenderness
Melt ; or succumb to a caress
That aloof image you present
To the unraptured firmament,
The envious cosmos. . . . Patently,
With Peace you are at enmity !

III

Yet—when the curtains are flung wide,
The planet still as death outside,

And you against my heart are sleeping,
Mystical Tryst we shall be keeping :
Spirit with Spirit soft will meet
And dance away, on phantom feet,
Over demoniac crags : abysses
Miraculously spanned with kisses—
Faëry girders, Dear, that must
As gossamer crumble into dust
When the first rind of mortal light
Moves on the ocean of the night,
And Aphrodite, from the wave
Of dream, is sunk within her grave—
Foundered where icy silence lies
Deep on her dream-enchanted eyes. . . .

Yea, till the white Dawn burns again
His eastward beacons, evening pain
And afternoon's remorses are
Forgotten. . . . O, in some sweet star
Beyond Betelgeuse, Sleep doth fold
The Book of Yesterday, and mould
Suspended consciousness to new
Powers and perceptions—I and you
Will waken, when the clock strikes eight,
With altruism inebriate :
Forgiveness on our lips : our eyes
A trifle dazed by Paradise . . . .

Girl ! when you said : " I'm going to bed ! "
That was the wisest thing you said. . . .
Shall I pursue, then, light as air,
You, to your warm, sequestered lair ?

Shall my feet follow where you trod—
The twilight Hinterlands of God?
And is it too dark for me to see
The other sleeping Half-of-Me?

Yes, night brings a sound of strange stirrings
About the house. . . . And a beat of wings. . . .

TO A JESTER

AY, sing of Love, thou Fool,
When night's dark curtains fall,
And the long, crimson shadows mantle
The dim baronial hall.

Strike thy steel mandoline;
To the blackened rafters raise
Thy voice, falsetto carolling
Love's praise.

Charm thou my Lady's heart
To such a tender frame
She shall, in dreams enchanted, speak
Through coral lips my name.

Then, Fool, all singing done,
Steal away, silently,
To sleep in thy lone turret room
Above the sleeping sea.

Haste thee! Go, get thee gone!
The tapers burn
Slender as life till Day,
Gold-clad, return.

Braemar: 1925

SONG

(From *The Sea of Sleep*)

DREAMING o'er coral gardens paving
The crystalline floor of the sea,
As a gull on the wings of the trade-wind,
Beloved, I come to thee.

Come—for a far shore seeking,
As mariners of old
Quested the dim Hesperides,
And the apples of red gold.

Beyond enchanted curtains,
At the portals of the day,
Perchance I'll find thee waiting—
Where flying-fishes play,
Where birds are all a-shimmer,
And skies are all aglow,
And sands are white as silver,
And purple love-flowers blow.

Over a sea soft sleeping,
From the shadows of the west,
My little craft comes stealing
To haven on thy breast. . . .

1926

LYRIC

DIAPERS the daisies the dew
as the night draws on;
burns the sky amber and blue
as sets the sun.

Burns the sky opal and gold,
crimson and grey—
as diaphanous curtains unfold
from the roof of day.

Flit, from dim tree to tree,
moths, in the June
dusk palpitating
with love for the moon!

Falls on the air a bell
note, liquidly;
as, crowned with asphodel,
you come to me:

lay your cool lips on mine,
breathe but a breath:
"Dreams of delight be thine,
now—and till death."

THURLESTONE

TIRED with our play, we lay down where the pale
Sea-thrift spread its cool carpet, virgin white,
And watched, with bated breath, the slow tide creep
Out to the wastes beyond, where one dun sail
Smeared the horizon's purple. I took your hand,
Your spray-damp hand, in mine; and wonderingly
Toyed with each fragile finger—as a child,
Weary of leaden soldiers and striped balls,
Might chance upon some faint-flushed hot-house flower
And dandle its petals, half-incuriously,
To speed the laggard minute on its way,
Its awful way, towards Oblivion.

You made no sound or stir. The silence pressed
Closer about us, ever closer, till
It seemed a sphere encased us, pliable
As thought. . . . and idleness in me took wing
Like a sleek bird; and dark Desire was born,
And stretched out tenuous tentacles that mauled
The dumb walls of our prison: those concave sides
Of nothingness that mocked futility!

So through the long, bright afternoon I strove
To pierce your strange fastidiousness, and wake
The You within you to a consciousness
Of my consuming need. . . . But though your lips
Made indolent promises, deep in your eyes
A glass-spun hardness lurked, that cancelled each
Ere it was spoken; and I knew my cause
Lost in the pleading. . . .
I kissed your soft, brown breasts,
Stained with the sun, and beautiful. You smiled. . . .

So, thought I, Helen smiled, when Paris paid
Passionate court to her as the sad, sweet moon
Dappled the shores of Marmora; and in
Love-sick despair, I gathered you to my heart
And held you there, captive in Time, and spoke
A million words, all meaningless, into
Your shell-small ears: crying, in agony:
"My Love, why art thou cruel, when to be
Kind costs so little and requites so much?"

Hours passed. The tide ran out. The rocks lay piled,
Like the space-cleansed excreta of a god,
Before us. . . . And suddenly you drew your limbs,
Lithe as a faun's, beneath you: trembling wound
Your arms about me: in surrender raised
Your body imminent to mine, and said:
"O foolish lover, would you end the sleep
Of love that might awaken but to weep?"

1927

BATHER

I

YOU are very slender and lovely, Dear, as you stand
Poised on the rocks above the sapphire sea;
With behind you the desolate sickle of milk-stained sand,
And before you the waters' unchanging immensity.

Your body is limned, cool marble, against the sky;
Your hair is an aureole drowned in the light of the sun;
About you, the lust-hungry seagulls waver and cry—
And you with the hush of the time and the tide are one.

II

You are very white as you run from the breaking wave,
Emerging with seaweed embracing your thighs here and there;
It may be you have sported and dived in a mariner's grave,
And the sun has made *blood* of your golden and glamorous hair!

Thurlestone: 1927

A SONG OF TIME

HOW long have I loved you—
a thousand years,
or more, or less?
Have I counted your tears

through the black, solemn nights
of the Ages Gone,
when you and I,
Gwen, were alone

in a world of terror,
and flame and flood,
with the moon—and the crackle
of bush-wood?

How many years have I loved you—
since Time began;
in the silken courts of Solomon,
the palaces of Han?

By the brimming banks of Tigris;
near a witching water-fall;
on a Himalayan mountain-top;
in a Matabele kraal?

When did I pluck the strings
of a quaint guitar,
in a rose-lit southern garden
'neath a star?

When wove the red hibiscus
to suit your wayward taste,
and strung ten onyx sea-shells
to gird your almond waist?

How many years have I loved you?
Ask the moon or the sun:
Markab, Mars or Sirius—
O, ask *anyone*.

Funchal: September, 1927

QUIXOTIC

GOLD from the Caribbean—pirate gold,
Spilled from age-rotted galleons foundered in
Its blue translucency: red ingots, bars,
Doubloons and gems to grace your palanquin:

Thibetan furs, brown apes and ivory:
Kashmiri silk and purple out of Tyre:
Peacocks from Hindustan, and cedar-wood
From Lebanon, I bring you, Heart's Desire!

Look not upon such lightly, Lady. If
I could soar out into the trackless whirl
Of space and snare a star, I'd bear it back,
A flaming topaz, to your feet of pearl!

Were I an angel, I would fly to God,
And beg a potion from His Crystal Stream
For you to drink; and from the Tree of Life
Shake the bright apples of love's deathless Dream!

Yes, were I God Himself, I'd abdicate
My Throne in your sweet favour; and proclaim:
"She is the Queen of New Jerusalem;
There is no Law—no Creed—beyond her Name!

"She is that Alpha and that Omega;
Her pallid face the Dawn; her eyes the Night.
She frowns—and planets crack, and suns expire!
She smiles—and æther throbs and thrills with light!"

Indian Ocean

ILLUSION

WHERE the slim reeds whisper, whisper
under the simulacrum of the moon,
and the mere is stiller than death,
hark! and you'll hear a breath—
Syrinx sobbing softly in the stillness:
"My Pan, will you not come soon?"
And the slim reed-sisters whisper, whisper:
"But it is not June. . . ."

"It is not June." Bygone, false Philomel—
ever beguiling my poor heart with song!
"It is not June"—those murmuring reed-nymphs know
how swiftly, after summer, the white snow
descends to cover up the Latmian flowers. . . .
Night, like a Nubian-Soldan, in the west
unfurls his flame-edged pennons,
droning: "Rest. . . ."

Syrinx hath called all day for Pan, alas!
The fauns couch in the shadows, glimmering,
and never stir, till yet a lovelier
than Syrinx weeps. . . . O, listen, now, to her
weeping for the swan: "Plumed lover, lift your bill's
cool, coral redness from the darkling shore
to kiss me. . . ." The jealous reeds reply:
"No more. . . ."

Dawn, with his dastard's dagger, tore my heart!
I woke and, trembling, thought that it was You
who, in your love, had slain me. . . . I saw your gold
tossed up, like Fatima's, upon the air
in glamorous rhythm. . . . And yet You were not there.
All the drab day, I dreamed that it was You;
but now I know that it was *never* You.
The sad Arcadian reeds are whispering—
"Nothing is true. . . ."

Delamere

FELON

TIME steals so much from me. . . . Now, it has stolen
The bright and burning image of your face,
Which I have treasured secretly through all
These long, unfruitful weeks, that swift have swollen
Into a year—like a tiny tide that plays,
Passionlessly, by day, on silver strands,
But with the moon and night waxes o'er full
And flings lascivious arms and foamy tails
Eastward and westward in a wild despair. . . .

Yes, tell it softly, now I have forgotten
Almost, the dear, deft curving of your mouth
That once was my delight. . . . I cannot see,
Even in fancy, the features that were You;
I cannot trace your dark, delicious hair—
Recapture the close pressure of your hand—
The ardour in your eyes. . . .
Time let's a dim
And dream-destroying curtain fall between
That summer Memory and me—and You,
Like a pale ghost, tremble upon the edge
Of its opacity; and call me so:
"Sad lover, I am here. I have come back.
My promise was not vain, though vain it seem——"

Your fingers twitch the curtain. Nothing stirs.
Sourly within myself, I say: "It is
A ghost's voice calling—calling—and not Her's. . . ."

Eilian Bay: 1930

TAILPIECE

HUSH! The whole world has crept away to sleep,
And only angels such late watches keep
As you and I keep now.
One kiss upon your brow—
Or your red lips—and I
Will steal away, too, very silently.

V

ULYSSES

LISTEN to the song that the sirens now are singing,
Over the dark and warring waters of the west,
Their voices like brittle bells in the twilight ringing
(Hold your ship, Helmsman !) from the islands of the blest.
Talk not to-night of those eloquent, pale faces,
Or the ancient apples in the bowers of love ;
On through the rapids, where the grey flood races,
Steer your course, Sailor, tho' the senses rove. . . .

" Come ! O, come ! Come ! " And who shall answer
" Never ! "
Who shall cry : " Onward ! " though the vast deep melt
away ;
Who shall lift his face firm to the stars for ever,
As the snowy arms enfold him, and unbind his feet of clay ?
Black is the night now, and the nymph-call clearer ;
And the hot blood bubbles in the veins like wine ;
And the tide grows stronger, and the island nearer,
And the faces of the singers of the shadows are divine.

Still steadfast, mighty Helmsman ! In such long, alluring
tresses,
The brave spirit, once inveigled, must wrestle till it die ;
And the laughter of the lovers, in their slimy seaweed
dresses,
Is a funeral-bell out-beating a wild dirge of misery.
What if the lips be scarlet, and the swan-soft breasts more
fragrant
Than sea-poppies or the pomegranate in flower ?

There is doom in those close kisses, and the spell-bound, swooning, vagrant
Sailor drinks them but to languish after one enchanted hour.

Nearer—yes—and ever nearer. Black the night, but that dread shore
Shimmers beyond the ravaged reefs as a marbled strand of dream;
And the voices of the singers now are louder than before,
And their icy arms are beckoning, and their avid glances gleam.
Peace, Ulysses—noble Captain! Though the world end, fix your eye
On the chart, and bid this Helmsman head his shuddering craft to sea;
Is it death there in the darkness, where the maelströms scream and cry?
Better a man's death, then, Ulysses, than that your crew should set you free!

THE ROSE OF LOVE

THE Rose of Love swung on its stem,
And lifted to the sky
Its crimson petals, eagerly—
So all who passed it by

Marvelled how exquisite it was,
In form and shade, how true;
"A lovelier rose than this," they said,
"The garden never grew."

All through the summer, the strange rose
Hallowed the garden—made
It glorious; till one day towards
The gates two shepherds strayed:

A laughing, lean-limbed shepherd-boy,
And a girl with dancing feet;
"Ah, see," he cried, "yon damask rose!
Savour its scent, how sweet!

"'T is redder than thy wine-red lips,
And softer than thy breast;
Lo, I have bruised it where I let
My fumbling fingers rest!"

The shepherd plucked the Rose of Love:
"In memory of me,
Wear it upon thy heart," he said—
And then, in ecstasy,

Kissed her hot mouth: her midnight eyes:
And murmured in her hair:
"Red Rose of Love, sweet Rose of Love!
Blossom beyond compare. . . ."

The sun sank on the Ionian sea;
Earth tilted to the night;
And in the garden everything
Grew cold, and marble-white.

The shepherd-lovers on the grass
Lay—body to body pressed;
And only baleful bat-eyes marked
The *blood* upon her breast. . . .

TO MYSELF ON REACHING MATURITY

LISTEN! You have heard them speak of the ancient glory;
You have heard them sing of the wonders of women and fame;
With eyes aglow, you have told over the story
Of those red wars that blazed round Helen's name.
With hurrying heart, you have read how her beauty burned in
Other men's hearts like an ichor distilled in a star;
And now you have reached your prime, you, too, will grow learned in
The poignant pleasures of passion, and seek them afar—
Roving the world in that same sad quest of Romance
Which lured mad mariners on to brave the song
Svelte, silver-throated sirens crooned, to entrance
Their avid ears. . . . Bright boy, take heed! Too long
Have earth's pale Circes sought your youth to snare
In languorous lies of love. Listen! Beware!

SHALL I SING OF HELEN?

WELL, what would you have me sing about to-night—
sing, perhaps, of those moon-haunted olive-groves
of the south,
where the little Eros, with his golden curls, goes fluttering
from one flower-girl to another, with the apple in his
mouth?

Sing, perchance, of those lonely Italian Calvaries
on the high paths that flout the eternal snows,
where Christ hangs, silently bleeding, on His painted face
a Question that yearns for an Answer no traveller knows?

Shall I sing of the twilight orchards of Avalon,
where Arthur sleeps; and the sword, Excalibur,
lies foundered forever in an argent lagoon;
and Launcelot dreams of the Queen, and does not stir?

Shall I sing of Hafiz, and those nude, dusky houris
who danced for his pleasure until the bibulous lark
carolled an *aubade* to the White Houri, Dawn—
rising, more pale than a pearl, from the desert's dark?

Speak! shall I sing of the majestic king-swan, urging
his vans towards the osier-bed where Leda lies
in loveliness, intent on her tryst, with the shadows
of the swan-wings softly mirror'd in her eyes?

Or shall I sing of Helen again, and her beauty
that kindled the proud tower-forests into flame—
and of all the wan wraiths of beauty who have followed
after
her, and have claimed beauty's heritance in her name?

Shall I sing a low song of sirens—of sirens singing
in the dread hour betwixt the night and morn
on the ashen reefs : with their ash-white arms outreaching :
with the red mouths, and hair like green, glowing corn :

with the long fingers, the seaweed-tinted fingers ;
and the drowning ships—
and the drowning sailors, weeping and laughing as, drowning,
they dream, in death, of those unkist coral lips ?

Shall I sing of a fabulous isthmus beyond the sun,
and the long sleep there that closes the last long day—
when the Roman releases the eagle ; and Pilate, brooding
by some fountain, sees Truth glimmering in its spray ?

O, shall I sing of Romance, my lady : telling
of the deathless dead of the Ever-so-long-ago ;
sing, with the voice of Sappho or Israfel,
of love, and the old lure, and the old lies ? No.

No. No—for this lute I take in my hand is broken,
and if it were Syrinx once, her voice now is dumb ;
and the old stories somehow seem sad stories now ; for youth,
which once was immortal, has died ; and the night dies.
Come !

SEEK HER NOT

SHE is not here. O, seek her not.
Empty the house and still;
With only the rustle of ivy
On the window-sill;
With only the creak of the staircase,
And the crumble of the stone,
And the echo of the footfalls
Of the Someone who is gone.

Mount you the crazy staircase;
Tread you each corridor;
Pace where the shadows carpet
Each uncarpeted floor.
Light you a thousand candles,
Setting each room aflame—
The house still sitteth silent
. . . With each silent room the same.

1925

SHE IS ASLEEP

THEY said: "She is asleep;
Folded her hands;
And her spirit is gone to keep
Tryst in mysterious lands;

"Across uncharted seas,
And infinity's foam,
Mysteriously it has set sail
To its mysterious Home."

Home. . . . where on jasper heights
Amaranth blows,
And God, on His white terrace, lights
The lantern of the rose;

Where skies are dew-blue dreams,
And no winds are,
And love is the beacon that beams
In the heart of a silver star. . . .

They said: "She is at peace
There—far away;
Lo, for her soul at Angelus
We have knelt down to pray."

They said—but I heeded not
Their platitudes vain.
These cannot give me back
My love to life again!

Llanbedrog

BEFORE TEA

SHE sits by the door,
Her Book on her knee;
And never any more
Will Rosalie see
Grandmama fumbling the worn, mellow pages,
Brittle as glass with the rot of the ages;
Ah, never any more will Rosalie hark
To Grandmama mouthing the Gospel of Mark—
The Gospels of Matthew, of Luke, or of John—
For Very Old Grandmama now has—gone on.

In her chair by the door,
She drew her last breath;
And now she sits silent
And frigid in death—
Her chin on her bosom,
Her eyes at the stare,
Her gnarlèd hands clasping
The arms of the chair.
Her Rosalie toddles to climb on her knee,
And pluck at her sequins: "Here's your Rosalie!"
But Grandmama glares with her dead, awful eyes,
Till Rosalie trembles, and whimpers, and cries:
"Grandmama, Grandmama, come to your tea—
For Mother has laid it all ready for three!"

But—
From her chair by the door,
From the Book on her knee,
Grandmama's stolen
To Heaven—for tea.

THE THIRD

I OFTEN think, when up the street
we walk in company,
Another comes and walks with us—
or, rather, walks with me.

I know not if from north or south,
or west or east he hies:
that ghostly, dim Invisible
with unseen, seeing eyes.

For nothing says he, shambling there,
that melancholy Third;
yet—listens, non-committally,
to all that may be heard.

Thus, up the street we make our way,
till way-making be done;
then—lo!—when you open our gate,
he glimmers. . . . and is gone.

A lone light in the night sky:
a beating of wings—
and your red mouth saying
innumerable things. . . .

. . . . .

After, when in the house we sit,
and without sings the wind,
I quite forget the thought that has
so occupied my mind.

RETURN

IT is only the rain falling
That you hear;
Or a late lark calling,
High over the mere;
Or only the wind in the leaves stirring,
Or a bat's wings whirring.

It is only the old creak
Of the old door;
Or only the old squeak
Of the mouse on the floor;
Aye, or only the tumble
Of plaster, when crumble

Some joists, or a rafter,
Surely and slowly,
With a sound like the laughter
Of dæmons unholy.

You will not breathe again,
From year's close to close,
In this old house of pain,
Scent of that Rose. . . .

TO LET

NOBODY really and truly knows
Who lives in the End House;
It may be a ghost, or a ghoul, or a djinn,
Or a bat, or a cat, or a mouse.

A silly board hangs on the wall:
"This Property to Let";
The rooms are bare: the windows gape
Blindless; and yet—and yet——

Often when up the fog-girt street
I homeward wend my way,
I hear a Voice from the dead old house
Breathe through the murk, and say:

"I am in residence again!
I have returned to you!"
And I pause by the battered, broken gate,
And stutter: "How do you do?

"Far have you journeyed, Unseen One,
Or is it otherwise?
I'm glad that you've come Home again. . . ."
And the Voice of the House replies:

"Yea, I have journeyed wide and far,
And many a strange thing seen;
I have straddled the neck of the blue Dog-star,
And often and often I've been

"Hurtled through space on a comet's tail,
To the Land of Ever After!
But now—alack!—I've been hurtled back!"
Says the Voice of the House, with laughter.

"And is it long you've sojourned there?
I ask, incuriously.
And: "One thousand years, or thereabouts,"
The Voice doth answer me.

Nobody really or truly knows
Who lives in the End House;
It may be a ghost, or a ghoul, or a djinn,
Or a bat, or a cat, or a—*mouse*.

INTERIOR

THIS is certain, certain's this:
When, at the day's decline,
I draw my chair to the hearthstone
Strange company is mine.

Strange are the guests who gather
About my fire, at ease
In the warm gloom and the shadow
With me, and the cat on my knees.

It's little enough we say to them,
My black cat and I,
As the wind goes ramping round the house
And the rain roars by.

It's little enough they say to us,
That melancholy host;
We just sit silent there and stare,
And all the world is—*ghost*.

MAGIC

ONCE on Plymouth Hoe,
Looking out to sea,
An old man touched my arm,
And: "Stranger," he said to me,

"Here on this very spot,
On that far-distant day,
Sir Francis played——" He raised his hand:
"And there the Armada lay!"

I stared, but the sun in my eyes
Made a golden glow
For a moment; and then I saw
The galleons. . . . Row upon row,

They were beating against the tide,
Their figure-heads a-gleam,
Their shrouds tossed high 'gainst the doom-dark sky,
And misted over with dream. . . .

I turned, and I cried: "Too late!
Too late, old man! They are here!"
He nodded. "Aye, grand," he said;
"Jest grand fer the time o' the year."

August, 1927

SCILLONIA

(An Impression)

OVER the sea,
Far, far in the West,
God scattered the Islands
Of the Blest;
Bright in the sun,
The sea-pinks glow
There, where the cormorants
Come and go:
Where the puffins pipe
And the black-backs scream,
And the stormy-petrels
Rock in dream.

The silk-soft sand of a tropical land
Embosoms the chrysoprase
Water that laps and simpers and slaps
In the alabaster bays
Where the seaweed floats its brilliant boats
And the grey-seals bark in pain
On the rocks and the reefs, as their ocean griefs
Dissolve in the salt sea-rain.

All, all is vanity,
And soon to be gone—
Sea-thrift and birds
To Oblivion;
Flowers of Tresco,
Never so bright
As to-day, must perish
In a night;

Palm and citron-tree,
Too, shall discover
Encroaching Atlantic
Kind as a lover:
Wooing their fruits
In a green sea-garden,
Where the New Fruits rot
And the Old Fruits harden. . . .
Till Time and Tide disband in thunder,
And all is ghosted Under—Under.

A half-wind stirs. Dead conifers
Dart to the sun-scorched grass.
High overhead, storm-capped with red,
Gargantuan galleons pass.
The half-wind dies: the doom-dimmed skies
Blush at the sun's caress;
The curlews are calling, and the night is falling
Fast over Lyonesse.

Hardly a breath
Bestirs the sea
To render its solemn
Psalmody;
In the plaque-bright gleam
Of the foundering sun,
St. Agnes—Annet—
Yea, every one
Of the islands nods
Its haloed head:
"*Angelus domini. . . .*"
——So to bed.

Yet lo! On the Bishop Rock, an eye
Of incandescent light
Stares, unrelenting, through the pitch
Proscenium of night!
And where the marbled sea-fronds rise
On the unresting swell,
The Spirit of Drowned Lyonesse
Mourns: "*Watchman! Is it well?*"

The Scilly Isles: August 5th, 1927

EQUATOR

THROUGH the jessamine filigree
Round the window, I saw the light
Come up behind the hills,
Carnelian and white;
Rosy red and gold,
Amber and amethyst—
A broad, perfervid tongue,
Licking away the mist
Till the ethereal Dome,
Inebriate with day,
Span as a gyroscope of flame
And the torpid earth lay
Like a quiescent hound,
After the league-long chase,
Sweating deliciously
In its own place.

Kenya: 1927

SUBMARINE

(From the Folies-Bergère)

DOWN, down, down through the sea-fans waving
Frail fronds in salutation to the moon's
Drowned ghost, I will precipitate myself
From earth's Time-tattered reef, towards those last
Abysses where immortal Lorelei
Drift through majestic and marmoreal halls
Like trancèd phantoms, fearful of the dawn—
Down will I surge : impassioned *plongeur* I,
Rending that green, aquatic gloom : a rude
Amphibian Icarus : dreaming of some
Pre-Palæolithic, twilight World of Love
Never yet glimpsed, remoter than the moon :
World of wan shadows, galleon-gleams and calm
Coral cathedrals ; stalactites and spires—
Gargantuan gargoyles, spongy palaces—
Pallid Pompeiis and foundered Ithacas !
There will I seek mine own ; and round and round
Concentrically chase her shimmering tail :
Lure her against my heart, and bind her fast—
Aloof Fish-Princess of the murmuring main,
Paler than Pomegranate, whom Shahraman
Woo'd from the deeps these many centuries gone !—
Kissing the chill, salt mermaid mouth at last. . . .

Paris : 1930

PETIT CABARET

SIX lithe legs, all in a row,
tripping intricately to and fro;
legs of white and legs of brown,
darting grotesquely up and down;
darting here and darting there—
supple as serpents in a snare.

Six vulpine eyes, of varying hue,
through grey cigarette-smoke ogling you—
that's what you find in Paris Town:
legs that go flickering up and down;
eyes that ogle and corks that pop,
till Day, with his burning brand, signs: "Stop!"

O World of legs and Painted Smiles,
I am grown weary of your wiles;
I have become estranged from you—
Leg-world, have you grown distant, too?

To think that legs are all the go,
when stars are above, and green grass below;
when the Milky Way wends to Romance
across Time's deserts of change and chance;
when nightingales sing in the dark,
and midsummer noons presage the lark—

to think, O World, Existence lies,
for you, in a couple of legs and thighs!

The smoke of your incense rises high
in a soft, red storm to the shining sky;
but your Priests are fools, and their Altar stands
as a desecration made with hands. . . .
And who shall guess what the End may be—
legs and jazz through Eternity;
a Crystal River of heady brew
to drain till the last drop throttles you—
and Ego-body feels its legs
of satin turn as stiff as pegs?

Paris

THE LAND OF HAN

ALL the houses in this street
are dead. On them, the sun
pours his fierce avalanche of light,
and yet there's never one
that just so much as blinks an eye,
or opes its door a crack
unto the casual passer-by—
Yellow, White or Black.

All the houses in this street
are dead; and this dark dust
that powders the harsh paving-stones
eventually must
rise ever higher and more high
about them, till, one day,
it doth completely submerge them,
and ghosts them all away:

As over Ashur's Nineveh
red sand did weave a shroud
in the forgotten Long Ago,
hiding that city proud,
that no man of the Morrow might
let his rude camels wend
down its dim aisles and sunlit, long
perspectives without end.

Yea, all these sullen houses sleep
deep in the noontide haze,
inanimate, inviolate—
their sightless eyes at gaze
on the Comings and the Goings
of the phantom forms that move
hither and thither, to and fro,
as elves in a wine-dark grove.

When they will waken from their trance,
these houses of old woes,
no one e'er deigns to speculate,
for no one really knows.
And six little hundred yards away,
the London River flows. . . .

I hurry me along the white
side-walk, with harassed mien:
knowing full well each step I take
by the Blind Eyes is seen:
cognisant that each thought I think,
each inhalation draw,
sends its vibrations, pulsingly,
through all the hideous maw

of this so somnolent and strange
and metamorphic spot,
where ghouls, hobgoblins, sprites and djinns
confer and plague and plot!

Then—suddenly—the wind blows cool:
a cur yaps, as a fly
settles upon his nose, buzzing,
then, busy, buzzes by.
A child in the gutter spins a jig:
a hurdy-gurdy sings
in another street. A woman bawls
inchoate blasphemings. . . .
The organ rattles, tunelessly,
a fox-trot nobody knows;
then slips into *Tippy Canoe*
by way of *The Heart of a Rose!*

A girl comes curtseying along
the ashphalt far ahead;
her neck glows white in the golden light,
her lips are a dream of red. . . .
A dumb door creaks. From it soft steps
a wrinkled Chinaman. . . .

Ah, now I know: the Secret guess!
This is the Land of Han!

Limehouse: 1923

DAYBREAK: NEW YORK

SEE how the river brims its banks!
By the sun turned blood,
The rolling stream of heliotrope
Expandeth, flood on flood,
To where the last perspectives faint
In the fountains of light
That play in the gossamer courts and squares
Of the Princes of Day and Night!

Out from the east, processional, they draw:
The caravans of Morning! Dawn is come!
Behold and tremble! Gabriel blows his horn
Of brass above the world! Time beats his drum
Across the shuddering continents and isles!
Around the planet pours the tempestuous fire—
The avalanche of Being! Vacuum sings—
Reverberate with pæans of desire!

It is the Dawn! Lo! even the smallest star
Hath sent its peerless quota in that train
Of molecules and rays. Those caravans,
Disbursing now their treasure, will again,
And yet again, for thy rude benefit,
Ply to the awful goals of Universe:
Circle the cosmos: from Orion's belt
Purloin the precious energy ye nurse
In vat and wire, and, where the comets toss
Their tawny manes, will, from leonid showers,
Wrest that unseen Effulgence which to birth
Bringeth thy glistening grain and topaz flowers!

The river brims its banks, and here and here,
From out the mist resplendent soars and sings
The city ye have builded: one by one,
Its spires and edifices higher flings
To greet Osiris. . . . Man of woman born,
Is it for this the Miracle grows old—
That ye may trade, in Crœsus' market-place,
Body and brain and soul for demon gold?

1923

SONG OF THE CARAVAN MERCHANTS

(From *The Sword*)

IN Bokhara grow red lilies—
Twine them in your lady's hair!
But if her shy and wayward will is
Not complaisant—leave them there

For other lovers' tender taking,
Underneath the Asian moon,
When the fire-flies are making
Magical the nights of June.

Our caravans by day are wending
O'er the desert, heavy laden
With gold trinkets: toys transcending
All the dreams of man and maiden.

Pearls and rubies out of China,
Purses purloined from Cathay,
When, sun-caught and kissed, they shine—are
Brighter than the light of day!

Belts and bangles from Baghdad we
Bring to deck the fairest Queen
Of the bazaars; and round her hang—see!—
Dazzling daggers Damascene.

Golden girls, your gleaming graces
(Flower-bosoms, shoulders, arms)
Swathe within our silks and laces!
Always half conceal your charms

Lest your lovers, all-demanding,
  Find no secret shrine to raid;
And, satiate, leave you. . . . while commanding
  To their sides some subtle jade

Better versed in love and loving,
  Knowing well a charm concealed,
To man's mind is much more moving
  Than a thousand charms revealed!

We have colours here entrancing—
  Ope the eye and bend the knee!—
Garments light as the white, dancing
  Waves of the Arabian Sea.

We have green and red and yellow—
  Run the samples through the hand!—
Orange, lemon—shades more mellow
  Than the silver Syrian sand:

Princes' purple, paupers' paper,
  Spread we underneath the sky:
You will need no lamp or taper
  To inspect *our* wares. Come, buy!

Lo! our camels stream serenely,
  Mighty tho' their burdens be,
From East, West, North and South: from cleanly
  Kashmir unto Tripoli,

To your city gates! . . . So squander,
  Dwellers in this lovely land,
All your wealth on us who wander
  From Baghdad to Samarkand:

From Jerusalem to Khiva,
  Kandahar to Hindustan—
Never, never more to leave a
  Route our stalwart caravan

Has not trod, in quest determined,
  To procure your heart's desire—
Whether you in rags, or ermined
  Splendour walk this wide Empire!

IN ISPAHAN

IN Ispahan,
  Where the tamarisk weaves,
Above the mosques and minarets,
Its labyrinth of leaves,

I loved you once. Ah, long ago,
The fountains sang to see
Your lovely mouth and amber eyes
Enslave the soul of me.

I loved you once. You were so young;
And I was as young as you;
But you found your wings, and from the nest
Of my boy-arms you flew.

I loved you once in Ispahan,
Where the red, rich lilies blow;
I cry: "I loved you once!" But they
Say: "Old men babble so. . . ."

. . . . .

To dark and distant Ispahan
The caravans still stream;
And each sweat-stippled camel bears
The fragment of a Dream.

THE HOUSE OF PLEASURE

A LITTLE wind came from the east,
Touching the curtain at the pane,
Blowing the scent of myrtle through,
And—lo!—was gone again.

A little wind. . . . and you stirred not
In your deep morning sleep;
I lay and watched you, silently,
Till back the wind did creep.

It blew the curtain from the glass,
And let the sunlight in—
A beam from God's white Eye that raked
The chamber of our sin.

Now gone the wind, and gone the sun,
For ever and ever more;
A deathly dew stands on my cheeks,
And you, Beloved—snore!

SONG IN DAMASCUS

COURT in the shadows, lovers,
For the young June moon
Above the mosques of Mahomet,
O, will clamber soon.

Tread very softly, lovers,
By the blue Abana's brim;
Damascus sleeps—but here and there
A ghost stirs, dark and dim.

And when you speak, speak softly,
All the wide world is still
And, earless, listening—
Whisper what you will,

Or else, lovers, perchance
The inebriate nightingale
May hear you sigh, or kiss,
And, jealous, blab the tale

Down the long, star-patterned
Boulevards of night,
And the morning, peering,
Find your faces white. . . .

Court in the shadows, lovers;
Time is a tragic Thief;
Love is a rose, and roses die,
And rose-red hours are brief.

Damascus: 1930

GREEN CHARTREUSE

(Café Continental, Damascus)

HER shoulders are as chaste as platinum;
And the delicate and diaphanous wisp of her gown
Clings to her budding breasts like a languid sigh,
Or a petal softly blown

By an April wind across the Tuileries. . . .
Under the lights,
Her hair glimmers as a mist of gilded tears;
Her mouth is moist and parted, but she is not smiling—
She is the Lady who Seldom Smiles—and her eyes are spears!

Unescorted, she sits aloof and alone at her table;
And every now and again, subconsciously stirs
A finger, and twines it adoringly round the stem
Of a diminutive goblet of green chartreuse.

The pseudo-Tzigane musicians (wan, cadaverous mummies)
Strum a *motif* that lingers persistently in the brain—
Telling of sun-drenched Andalusian noons,
And the little dark mountains of Africa seen after rain.

1930

PALMYRA

THE sun, that scarlet dragon of the East,
Tosses his tartan tail and, one by one,
Lashes the mountains—an insensate beast—
Till the last, flickering flags of night are gone
And all those dawn-lit domes and peristyles,
And perilous pinnacles, against the blue
Soar up in silver, as the monster smiles
And belches burning baptism anew
From his hot maws. . . . But in her palace cool,
Palmyra's Queen, deep in a bower of palms,
Stirs not—until the dragon, like a fool,
Swoops from the void to clasp her in his arms,
Laving her loveliness with baleful breath—
Howling: "If *you* awake not, day is Death!"

Istanbul

SALAMBO

(From a painting by Jules Toulot)

NOW from her peerless form her garment falls
Soft to the tessellated floor. She stands
Straight as a spear of ivory: her hands
Clasped to her milk-white flanks. The Python crawls
Stealthily down the curtain. . . . and all too soon
Each sinuous, ebon fold will twirl and twine
About her limbs, her body half-divine,
In an obscene embrace beneath the moon.

Schahabarim hath spoken: "Ere thou can'st start
To seek for Tanith's cloak, this rite thou must
In first observe: abasèd to the dust,
Cleave the black, sacred snake-god to thy heart;
Rejoice to feel his titillant caress;
Sanction his rude, barbed kisses on thy skin
To linger—yea, all this, if thou would'st win
For kind and kinsman Fortune and Redress!"

The Carthaginian slaves shudder. The lamps stare.
See! caught within the strange orgasm she sways
Appalled! And the palely-purple and passionless rays
Of moonlight eddy in and out her hair
Like auroral flames, as the ghoul-Python slips
Between her lovely, slime-polluted breasts,
And on each scarlet nipple a moment rests
His flattened head—dull-dreaming of her lips.

NOCTURNE

SLEEPS Semīramis. . . . O'er her eyes,
Pale lids have fallen petal-wise;
Ungirt, her hair's perfervid shower
Lacquers her pillow: in her bower
Of oleander stirs not one
Handmaid—for them, the jovial sun,
A husky nomad, will not climb
Again the lilac hills of Time.

Dreameth she there, august, serene,
In death indubitably Queen;
The fabulous fountains drip more slow
In the crumbling, crimson courts below;
Her ring-doves mournfully do horn,
Upon the domes, their plaint forlorn:
Shrill threnody of Ended Things—
And a bat beats banshee wings. . . .

No goat-foot Satyr hither skips
To peep and pry, and from the lips
Of alabaster-breasted girls
Suck honey'd kisses. . . . Pleiad pearls,
Bright orbs, a ghostly vigil keep,
And no man shall disturb her sleep.
Death closeth Semīramis' eyes
With pale lids fallen petal-wise. . . .

JEW

"THE bloke nex' door's a bloody Jew—
That's wot 'e is!" said he.
"Gawd blast all Jews! Damn, lousy swine!"
. . . He drained his cup of tea.

"If that there Moses mucks around
This 'ouse—I'll flay 'is 'ide!"
He sulphurously assured his white
And eighteen-year-old Bride.

She darned his socks a while, and then:
"Lord, Jem, what's up wiv you?"
She smiled: "'Ave you forgotten, Jem,
As Jesus was a Jew?"

MEMORY

AH, give me not a rose—they are too red;
It is his heart's blood, not a rose, I see.
Do you think I have forgotten he is dead,
He—with his shining eyes and golden head—
He who was such a tender son to me?

Give me what flowers you will; and let them be
All colours of the rainbow, but not *red*;
For still my wrinkled, hollow eyes can see
Him, as he, laughing gaily, said to me:
"Mother, could you imagine *me* as dead?"

Leave me my thoughts of him; and let the flowers
Sleep in the garden for a little while.
Dear Golden Head! What golden, happy hours
Have we not spent, when the wide world seemed ours,
And all my sunshine was your sunny smile?

And he is dead! This happy, laughing boy!
Somewhere, beneath some wooden cross, he'll sleep
Unmindful of the frenzied, passionate joy
He brought into my life. My little boy!
Dead! Yet—I have his memory to keep. . . .

1919–1920

ASSIZE

AMELIA ARMPIT, Colonel Prod,
went, one day, to meet their God.
For months the twain had lived in sin,
but courteous Peter let them in,

saying: "Although your record's shady,
you're quite a nice, refined young lady
really; and Proddy's 'reputation'
saved—I'm sure—the British Nation."

Summoning a seraph, then, he said:
"Have them into the Presence led;
on their behalf, put in a word—
the woman's tremulous as a bird;

" the Colonel's trying to bluff it out,
but sweat's a-trickling down his snout;
and, I suspect, he has a sinking
feeling when he isn't drinking!"

Thus Armpit and Prod knelt down before
the azure Throne, and swore—and *swore*—
they hadn't meant to be so naughty
(in truth, the D.S.O. grew haughty

about the matter). And 't was odd,
no answer was vouchsafed by God.
So, presently, each tried to peep
into His face—He was asleep.

The austere Head of gold was bowed
in languid beauty. Prod felt cowed
and shut his mouth. . . .
But Armpit said:
" Gilbert, is God asleep or—dead?"

Vast silence held that Council Hall,
and Armpit and Prod, in dismal thrall
until (a thousand æons gone by)
the Holy Sleeper blinked His eye:

stirred where He sate: blew one great blast:
" Hurrah—I've had a nap at last!"
" You n-never heard us——" Proddy panted;
God laughed: " I take all lies for granted. . . ."

Delamere

CAROL

ALL on a winter's eve,
In a manger lowly,
Was born in Bethlehem
Lord Jesus holy.

And from the East there came
The Magi three,
Laden with offerings,
The Babe to see:

Drew they from the sullen courts
Of Herod, near
Unto that hostelry
In dark Judaea.

Knelt each on that rude floor,
Breathed each a prayer—
Spreading their gifts upon
The straw strewn there:

Red gold and frankincense,
And fragrant myrrh:
Laying their caskets down
At the feet of her

Against whose virgin-white
And hallowed breast
He His most humble head
In slumber pressed,

While, poised above the world,
An angel-throng
Sang—a bright galaxy—
The stars among.

So, on that winter's eve,
Old legends tell,
Was strangely wrought by God
The Miracle!

THE STAR

OF that dim night,
Now lost in Time,
When the roofs were thickly
Thatched with rime;

When the air was crystal-
Clear, and cold
And keen as a blade,
A Tale is told,

More wonderful
Than the legends written
Of Greece and Rome
By pale, love-smitten

Poets: a Story
Of a Star
That blazed in the heavens
Wide and far,

As a symbol and sign
Over all the earth
That Mary had given
Jesu birth!

And to-day, I wonder,
Do we quest
The skies in vain
For their ghostly guest?

Do we catch no glimmer,
No glint, no gleam,
There, where the singing
Planets stream

Round their predestined
Orbits vast,
Till chance and change
And Time be past?

And is the Dream ended,
The Glory laid down,
Of Star and Babe,
Of Cross and of Crown?

Ah, no; ah, no—
I do them wrong:
Still in men's hearts
An angel-song

Echoes and echoes,
And will not cease:
"*I am the Way and*
My Way is Peace. . . ."

NEW YEAR

NOW the Old Year's reign is done;
Passes it to Oblivion;
In the womb of Time, beyond the sun,
The New Year draws its pristine breath
As unto birth it hurrieth,
Fleet as the wind on the heels of Death!

"I bring you gifts of songs and flowers,
The happiness of April hours;
July laughter, Autumn pain—
Calamity rides in my train—
But love for lovers is there, too,
Stored with my rosemary and rue!"

Now the Old Year's reign is done;
Passes it to Oblivion;
From the womb of Time, beyond the sun,
A child is born. . . . Pale star to star
Sings its *Te Deum* clear and far;
And Sultán Day, within his car
Of gold, triumphant stems and steers
His Pegasus among the spheres,
Whilst Holy Heaven chants and cheers!
1926

POSTSCRIPT

AND when at last earth's casual candles gleam
Pale through the fogs of Time, and down the stream
Of Death I sail, say this of me, I pray:
" His songs, at least, were worthy of his Dream."

Yes, and say this: " No matter through what new,
Immaculate heavens his spirit, like the dew,
Drifts now, we who are left to scan the lines
He penned, have found his Dream of Beauty true."

THE END

WORKS BY

ALFRED GORDON BENNETT

Romances

THE VALLEY OF PARADISE
THE FOREST OF FEAR
THE SEA OF SLEEP

Novels

THINE IS THE KINGDOM
VOICES OFF

Verse

COLLECTED POEMS

In Preparation

THE SWORD
(A Poetical Play)